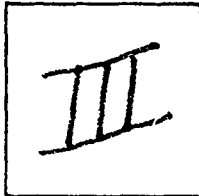


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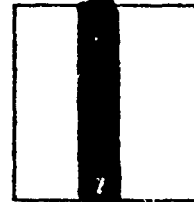
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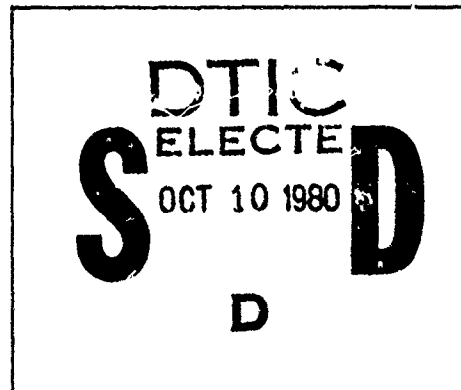
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THE CONFEDERATE DEFENSE OF VICKSBURG;
A CASE STUDY OF THE PRINCIPLE OF
THE OFFENSIVE IN THE DEFENSE.

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

ROBERT TIMOTHY HOWARD, MAJ, USA
B.S., Northeastern University, 1963
M.S., Texas A&M University, 1970

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1972

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

NAME OF CANDIDATE Major Robert T. Howard

TITLE OF THESIS The Confederate Defense of Vicksburg: A Case
Study of the Principle of the Offensive in the Defense

APPROVED BY:

Margaret E. Morrison, Research and Thesis Adviser
Henry H. Burke, Member, Graduate Research Faculty
Jerry W. Huff, Member, Graduate Research Faculty
William J. Zeman, Member, Graduate Research Faculty
Jay B. Hunt, Member, Graduate Research Faculty

DATE: 14-JUNE-1972

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency.

ABSTRACT

This study concerns an analysis of the Confederate defense of Vicksburg with respect to one of the nine principles of war, the principle of the offensive.

The problem in the study was to determine if Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton ever applied the principle of the offensive during his defense of Vicksburg and to determine why he failed to gain any freedom of action during the Vicksburg Campaign.

The important conclusions are:

1. Pemberton applied the principle prior to May 1, 1863.
2. He did not apply the principle during the final Union thrust for Vicksburg, mainly because of the lack of cavalry and of intelligence.

ABSTRACT

This study concerns an analysis of the Confederate defense of Vicksburg with respect to one of the nine principles of war, the principle of the offensive. The loss of Vicksburg in the American Civil War was a mortal blow to the Confederacy in that it split the south in two and resulted in the opening of the Mississippi River to the Union forces.

During the Campaign for Vicksburg Major General Ulysses S. Grant, leading a Union army engaged Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton, commanding a Confederate army, and proceeded to win one of the most brilliant military successes in history. A distinct contrast in aggressiveness appeared to exist between Grant and Pemberton during this campaign; because once Grant landed his army in Confederate territory, he retained the initiative and kept Pemberton at his mercy. Pemberton was unable to overcome the difficulties he experienced and received little help from outside his command. Finally, because of despair among his men, he surrendered Vicksburg to the Union on July 4, 1863 after forty-seven days of miserable siege warfare.

The basic problem in the study was to determine if General Pemberton, even though completely defeated by Grant,

ever applied the principle of the offensive during his defensive operations and to determine why he failed to gain any freedom of action during the Vicksburg Campaign.

Certain "actions" that can be taken by a commander relative to the principle of the offensive in the defense and certain "factors" which may prevent his taking these actions are identified and employed in the analysis.

Among the more important conclusions of the thesis are:

1. The Confederate commander at Vicksburg applied the principle of the offensive against Grant's initial probes into Mississippi and against Federal cavalry raids into the Vicksburg area.

2. The Confederate commander at Vicksburg did not apply the principle of the offensive against Grant's army during the final Union thrust for Vicksburg (May 1 to July 4, 1863). Several of General Pemberton's subordinate commanders, however, did apply the principle during this same period.

3. The primary reasons for Pemberton's failures with respect to the application of the principle of the offensive were his lack of intelligence resulting from his lack of cavalry and interference with his command decisions from higher authority.

"THE ART OF WAR IS, IN THE LAST RESORT,
THE ART OF KEEPING ONE'S FREEDOM
OF ACTION" - XENEPHON*

* Marshal Ferdinand Foch, The Principles of War,
trans. Hilaire Belloc (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd,
1918), p. 101, quoting Xenophon.

PREFACE

In searching for an appropriate research topic as a student at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, I became interested in the principles of war and how they were applied in previous battles. Although my previous training was in Civil Engineering and not in History, I nevertheless decided that an analysis of a decisive historical battle or campaign utilizing one of the principles of war would be an interesting thesis project in pursuit of the Master of Military Art and Science degree.

In the book, Twenty Decisive Battles of the World, LTC Joseph B. Mitchell identifies the Vicksburg Campaign as the most decisive contest of the Civil War because of its political and strategic importance and because it split the South in two and made the final Union victory more certain.* In reading his account of the Campaign, I was intrigued by the distinct contrast in aggressiveness that appeared to exist between the two opposing commanders. Major General Ulysses S. Grant, the Union commander, was always on the offensive and appeared to so dominate the Campaign that Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton, the Confederate defender, was constantly at his mercy. Pemberton, however,

* Sir Edward S. Creasy and LTC Joseph B. Mitchell, Twenty Decisive Battles of the World (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), pp. 261-262.

appeared plagued by a number of problems over which he had little or no control and as a result, remained on the defensive throughout the Campaign. This contrast in aggressiveness led me to believe that the principle of the offensive was perhaps the one principle of war that was very successfully applied by the Federals, yet must have been poorly applied by the Confederates in this decisive Campaign.

From my study of the principle of the offensive, I was aware that although the application of this principle is normally associated with offensive warfare, it must also be applied in a defensive situation in order to permit the defender to regain freedom of action. Therefore, although he was in a defensive posture, Pemberton probably should have applied the principle of the offensive in order to keep his attacker off-balance and regain his freedom of action. Yet, Pemberton failed to achieve any freedom of action during the entire campaign and I wondered why this was so.

The objective of this study, therefore, was to examine the Confederate defensive operations during the Vicksburg Campaign in terms of the principle of the offensive in an effort to discover the circumstances and errors that may inhibit the successful application of this principle when defending against a numerically superior force. The study is intended to give students of military science an understanding of the importance of the offensive in a defensive

situation by examining the Confederate failures in this regard.

Through knowledge of the difficulties experienced by the Confederate command at Vicksburg, a student of military science may develop an appreciation for the importance of the offensive in the defense. The study may also serve to emphasize the need for students of the military art to examine historical battles with respect to the fundamental principles of war so that they may better understand not only how these principles are applied, but what factors may prevent their application.

While recognizing that a study of the total political and military environment of the Civil War years would have contributed to the attainment of the research objective, I nevertheless sought to concentrate on purely military factors applicable only to the Vicksburg Campaign. Thus, many other political and military considerations outside the Vicksburg area, which may have impacted on the result of the Campaign, were not researched.

I wish to thank Mrs. Marilyn Slack for her typing effort and for her assistance in preparing the final thesis.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my wife, Ciretta, for her patience and understanding throughout the course of this study.

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INTRODUCTION

"Ability to defeat the enemy means taking the offensive." - Sun Tzu¹

In the above quote Sun Tzu expounded on the importance of offensive action in warfare. His concept is clearly applicable to offensive war but it can also apply to the defense. In this thesis the Confederate defense of Vicksburg is examined in a historical context utilizing the concept of offensive action while in a defensive posture.

The defense is a temporary measure and during the conduct of the defense every possible action must be taken which will assist in regaining the initiative and in destroying the attacking force. According to the scholars of warfare these actions may be offensive in nature and should be adopted by the defender, to the extent possible, in order to assist in achieving total victory. The purpose of this introduction is to introduce the offensive actions that a defender can take, to present the factors which may prevent him from taking these actions, and to state the problem which was investigated in this study.

Examination of selected military classics from the writings of Sun Tzu to those of modern times indicates that

¹Sun Tzu, The Art of War, trans. Lionel Giles, ed. Brigadier General Thomas R. Phillips (Harrisburg, Pa: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1957), p. 52.

there are certain primary "actions" relative to the principle of the offensive which can be taken by a commander when in a defensive posture. The first such action is that of the spoiling attack. Clausewitz stated that the defense was not a mere shield but a shield formed of skillfully delivered blows.² Today these blows are called spoiling attacks, the purpose of which is to prevent the enemy from massing. One offensive action then, that a commander can take when in a defensive posture, is to continually harass the enemy by the use of skillfully delivered spoiling attacks. Clausewitz also discussed the importance of remaining active rather than passive and wrote that a commander, when on the defense must "attack the enemy frontally and from the flanks even as he is attacking us."³ This action would be a counterattack according to present day military terminology. There is one other major action that was also alluded to by Clausewitz,⁴ and that is, to avoid becoming fixed. The particular wording of this action is the same as that used in the U.S. Army today. There are other actions that a commander can take such as raids, patrols, etc., but these can usually be associated with one of the above.

²Karl von Clausewitz, On War (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1950), p. 317.

³General Carl von Clausewitz, Principles of War, ed. and trans. Hans W. Gatzke (Harrisburg, Pa: Military Service Publishing Company, 1942), p. 16.

⁴Clausewitz, On War, pp. 54, 96, 320.

The examination of the selected military classics also revealed certain "factors" which could prevent a commander from taking the primary actions discussed above. There are four of these factors, the first of which is aggressiveness on the part of the commander. Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, Jomini and Marshal Foch, are among the many military writers who have addressed the importance of bold, aggressive behavior in battle. The more aggressive a commander, the more willing he will be to take the actions listed in the preceeding paragraph. This aggressiveness is the "driving force" or the "will to win" mentioned by Fuller⁵ and is a factor that can affect the application of the principle of the offensive. Sun Tzu recognized that an army could be "hobbled" by too much interference either from those higher commanders unfamiliar with the situation on the ground or by the sovereign.⁶ This interference can also affect a commander's ability to apply the principle of the offensive. Another factor is that of available intelligence. United States Army doctrine states that, in applying the offensive a commander must exploit his enemy's weakness. To do this, intelligence on the enemy situation must be available. The final major factor that can affect the application of the offensive is the availability and type of resources; the

⁵John F. C. Fuller, The Foundations of the Science of War (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1925), p. 283.

⁶Sun Tzu, pp. 50-51.

"power to endure" or "staying force" of the army.⁷ If the materials or manpower needed to wage war are insufficient, a commander will be less apt to take the offensive actions listed earlier.

In this treatise the above "actions" and "factors" are employed in a case study of a campaign in which the offensive was violated by the defending commander and in which the attacker had numerical superiority. Specifically two problems required solution:

1. Did General Pemberton apply the principle of the offensive in his defense of Vicksburg?

2. What factors contributed to General Pemberton's lack of success in achieving any freedom of action?

The study was limited to an analysis of the key decisions and actions at the Confederate high command level since it was this command level which issued the orders and instructions that affected the outcome of the campaign. A detailed analysis of the Union command was not attempted because this would not contribute to the problem solution.

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter I is a brief biographical sketch of three key individuals in the Confederate high command, Jefferson Davis, General Joseph E. Johnston, and General John C. Pemberton. Chapter II is a

⁷Fuller, p. 283.

discussion of the military situation in the department of the west prior to the final Union thrust for Vicksburg. The major battles in the Campaign prior to the siege of Vicksburg are discussed in Chapter III and the siege of the city is discussed in Chapter IV. The authors conclusions are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER I

CONFEDERATE COMMAND

"Although weapons and tactics have changed continually in step with technological progress, the basic controlling element in war-man-has remained relatively constant."¹

The Vicksburg Campaign in the American Civil War took place in the fields surrounding Vicksburg, Mississippi during the spring and early summer of 1863. Major General Ulysses S. Grant, leading a Union army, engaged Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton, commanding a Confederate army, and proceeded to win one of the most brilliant military successes in history. Grant's victory resulted in the loss for the Confederates of a key area in the control of the Mississippi River. The final Union offensive began with the landing of Grant's army south of Vicksburg on 30 April 1863 and culminated in a forty-seven day siege of the city which ended on 4 July 1863.

As a result of the battles fought by Pemberton and Grant, the city of Vicksburg fell to the Federals and the Mississippi River was once again open to Union shipping. The blow was a mortal one to the Confederacy in that it split the Southern States in two and resulted in the availability of

¹Vincent J. Esposito and John Robert Elting, A Military History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1964), [p. 4].

General Grant's large army for the decisive operations which would finalize the Union victory.

General Pemberton was the commander who ultimately surrendered this key Confederate position to the Union and as was mentioned in the Preface, he was constantly at the mercy of his more aggressive adversary. During the entire Campaign a striking contrast in aggressiveness between the two commanders was apparent. Pemberton, however, was not the only senior Confederate commander who made the critical decisions that affected the outcome of the Campaign. Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederate States and General Joseph E. Johnston, the commander of the Department of the West, were also either directly or indirectly involved. A brief introduction to the background and relationships of Davis, Johnston and Pemberton will therefore assist in understanding the events that transpired during the defense of Vicksburg.

Jefferson Davis was born in Christian County, Kentucky on June 3, 1808 and after preliminary schooling, entered the United States Military Academy on September 1, 1824. Among the cadets at the Academy during the same period were Joseph E. Johnston and Robert E. Lee. In 1828 Davis was graduated twenty-third in a class of 34, was commissioned a second lieutenant and was assigned to remote posts in Wisconsin and Illinois.²

²George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy (Cambridge, Mass: The Riverside Press, 1891), I, p. 416.

Seven years after his graduation, Davis resigned his commission and then spent many years as a farmer and country gentleman before entering politics in 1845. That same year he was elected to Congress. Except for a brief tour of duty during the Mexican War, he remained in politics, taking his seat again in 1847. Davis was an active participant during the heated debates concerning States' rights and on January 21, 1861, announced the secession of Mississippi to the Senate. On the eighteenth of February he was innaugurated president of the Confederate States of America.

During his tenure as president, Davis was a difficult man to work with. He was rashly loyal to his friends and rarely forgave an enemy and because of this blind loyalty, Davis succeeded in angering many Southern officials.³ His appointment of Lucious B. Northrop, a former companion-in-arms, to the important post of Chief of Subsistance did exactly that. Northrop was not an efficient administrator and the deplorable supply situation which resulted from his appointment brought loud cries of protest from the ranking military and other high level Confederate officials. In spite of this hue and cry, Davis retained Northrop in this important post throughout the war.⁴

³Frank E. Vandiver, Rebel Brass (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), p. 28.

⁴B.J. Lossing, Pictorial Field Book of The Civil War (New York: T. Belknap and Company, 1868), II, pp. 21-22; and Mary Boykin Chesnut, Diary From Dixie (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), p. 99.

The Southern hierarchy were critical of Davis' strategy which was defensive in nature. Although most of the officials in the central government advocated a more aggressive military policy, Davis continued to try to defend every square inch of Confederate territory and some officials were concerned about Davis' planning ability. The former Supreme Court Justice John A. Campbell, after two years of watching the President discharge his duties, did not believe Davis ever had a plan at all:

. . . the Secretary and the President are at their wits end and seem to have no plan . . . This is characteristic of the President. He is not a comprehensive man. He has no broad policy, either of finance, strategy or supply.⁵

This statement is perhaps overly critical of Davis, who did have a plan, albeit a defensive one, but nevertheless a plan.

Davis was very fond of everything pertaining to military matters and would have preferred a position in the field to that of President.⁶ Although he had had only limited military experience, Davis believed himself to be as competent a general as any of those leading the Confederate Armies. He once confided to his wife that he and Lee, each leading one wing of the Army of Northern Virginia, could

⁵Edward Younger, ed., Inside the Confederate Government The Diary of Robert Garlinc Kean (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1957), p. 72.

⁶Jefferson Davis, The Rise and Fall of The Confederate Government (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881), I, p. 230.

"wrest a victory from those people."⁷ Because of this egoism he did not hesitate to interfere with military operations and created a great deal of ill-feeling between himself and his military commanders. This situation continued throughout the war.

Davis was handicapped, ironically, by the States' rights policy which he and other Southern leaders preached and because of this policy, he had difficulty uniting the efforts of the Confederate States. The various governors were often violently opposed to assisting another state at the expense of their own.

David had a difficult task. He was President of a country that in reality was many little countries and this situation made central control, forced cooperation among the States and military discipline at high levels, very complicated. The poor communications net that existed at the time made command and control all the more difficult. Only because of his great inner strength did Davis last to the end.

Joseph Aggleston Johnston was born on February 3, 1807 at "Cherry Grove" Prince Edward County, Virginia. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1829, thirteenth in a class of 46.⁸ Except for a short period as a civil engineer, Johnston's career was that of a soldier and

⁷Varina J. Davis, Jefferson Davis - A Memoir, By His Life (New York: Bedford Company Publishers, 1890), II, p. 392.

⁸Oulism, 1, pp. 427-428.

by the time he had resigned his commission to join the Confederacy in 1861, had attained the rank of Brigadier General. During the early stages of the war Johnston commanded the armies of Northern Virginia until he was replaced by General Robert E. Lee because of wounds suffered at Seven Pines. After recovering from these wounds he was made commander of the Department of the West. In this capacity his mission was to coordinate the efforts of General Braxton Bragg, the commander of the Department of Tennessee and General John C. Pemberton, the commander in Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana.

Johnston was one of the leading Confederate generals and went through the entire war without losing a battle. General Ulysses S. Grant had considerable respect for Johnston's defensive ability. Grant once wrote that, with respect to the defensive maneuvers of the Confederate army during the campaign in Georgia, not even Sherman, "nor any other officer, could have done it better"⁹ than Johnston.

Johnston, however, disliked risks and the only important attack that he undertook was the one at Seven Pines early in the war. Another Union officer, General J. Hooker, also wrote that he respected Johnston, but it is interesting to note what he respected him for:

⁹U.S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1885), II, p. 525.

General Johnston, . . . as he abandoned his intrenched positions, conducted his retreat, in my judgement, in a prudent and consummate manner, both in strategy and tactics.¹⁰

Of all the high ranking officers in the Confederate Army at the beginning of the Civil War, Johnston had as much or more battle experience as any. Among the troops he had a reputation as a fighter and was frequently near the front lines.¹¹ His wounds at Seven Pines and those he suffered during the War with Mexico were apparently the result of this desire for front line participation.¹² By the time of the Vicksburg Campaign, Johnston had more experience in commanding large numbers of troops in battle than either Davis or Pemberton and was well known as a competent Confederate general.

John Clifford Pemberton was born of Quaker ancestry in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 10, 1914. Pemberton too was a West Point man and was graduated twenty-seventh in a class of 50 in 1837.¹³ His early assignments were as an artillery officer and in this capacity he saw action against

¹⁰Joseph E. Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), p. 463.

¹¹There is some question regarding Johnston's desire for a fight. The claim has been made that, when compared to Lee, Johnston was much more passive and defensively oriented; see Bruce Catton, Never Call Retreat (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1965), p. 318.

¹²Bradley T. Johnson, A Memoir of The Life and Public Service of Joseph E. Johnston (Baltimore: R.H. Woodward and Company, 1891), pp. 14, 91.

¹³Cullum, I, pp. 683-684.

the indians in Florida, during the border disturbances along the Canadian border and in the Mexican War. It was during the latter conflict that he was breveted Captain and later Major for gallantry.

At the outset of the Civil War, Pemberton, as a Northerner, made a difficult decision. He was strongly sympathetic with the Southern cause and because of this, elected to resign his commission and offer his services to the Confederacy. This decision altered his entire life and made him the object of criticism by Northerners and Southerners alike. Another Southern general, Richard Taylor, once wrote that Pemberton must have certainly "been actuated by principle alone; for he had everything to gain by remaining on the Northern side."¹⁴

Immediately following Pemberton's resignation, the state of Virginia appointed him lieutenant colonel and gave him the power to organize the artillery and cavalry of that state. Pemberton, as an efficient officer, rose rapidly in rank and by February of 1862 had attained the rank of major general. His first major command was that of the Provisional Army commanding the department which included South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. His predecessor in this command was General Robert E. Lee. It was during this period that Pemberton counseled the abandonment of Fort Sumter

¹⁴Richard Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1879), p. 116.

because he believed it had no protective value for the city of Charleston. He concentrated instead on the construction of Fort Wagner and Battery B much to the dislike of the townspeople. This defensive concept, however, proved correct because both Wagner and Battery B protected the city of Charleston long after the Union forces had leveled Fort Sumter.¹⁵

On October 13, 1862 Pemberton was promoted to lieutenant general and was given command of the military department comprising Mississippi and Louisiana east of the Mississippi River; this department included the city of Vicksburg. Prior to this assignment, Pemberton had had little opportunity to employ large armies in battle for his previous assignments were more concerned with troop organization and training and the construction of defenses.

During the months preceeding the final and successful Union campaign against Vicksburg (that is, prior to May, 1863) the general consensus of Southern leaders was that Pemberton was an efficient and effective commander. Although there was some feeling against him prior to April of 1863,¹⁶ the great majority of letters, messages and newspaper reports were favorable towards him.¹⁷ T. J. Wharton, who was

¹⁵J.B. Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1866), I, p. 388.

¹⁶R.S. Bevier, History of the First and Second Missouri Brigades 1861-1862 (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand and Company, 1879), p. 165.

¹⁷John C. Pemberton, Pemberton, Defender of Vicksburg (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), pp. 43-47.

attorney general of Mississippi at the time of the Vicksburg Campaign, once conferred with Davis concerning Pemberton's popularity prior to the Campaign and related the following as being the substance of that conversation:

I had never seen a more laborious and painstaking officer, or one who devoted more attention to the minutest details pertaining to the army under his command; that while many of our citizens doubted his loyalty to the cause, more from the fact that he was of Northern birth than anything else, I believed that there was not a man connected with the government from himself as President to the lowest magistrate, nor in the army from General Lee to the humblest private, whose heart was more deeply interested in the success of our cause than that of General Pemberton.¹⁸

It was not until after Grant had begun his final campaign (April, 1863) that Southern leaders in his department, both military and civilian, began to speak out against him.¹⁹ Some of these critics, at the conclusion of the Campaign, had even labeled him a traitor.²⁰

No evidence could be found that would indicate that Pemberton had difficulty with either Davis or Johnston prior to the Campaign. Johnston was apparently a good friend of

¹⁸Ibid., p. 41, quoting New York Herald, 17 August 1881.

¹⁹The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (hereinafter cited as OR), Prepared under direction of the Secretary of War pursuant to Act of Congress approved 16 June 1880 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1904), L11, Pt. 2, pp. 468-469.

²⁰Frank A. Montgomery, Reminiscences of A Mississippian in Peace and War (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company Press, 1901), p. 127.

his and respected him accordingly. It was not until after the surrender of Vicksburg that Johnston became openly critical of Pemberton's actions and Pemberton answered Johnston's criticism with some of his own for Johnston. Davis, on the other hand, supported Pemberton to the end and even praised him for his efforts after the loss of Vicksburg.²¹

The personality problem in this Confederate chain of command did not involve Pemberton at all for the rift was between Davis and Johnston, a rift which, by the end of the war, had developed into bitter mutual hatred. The feud lasted for the remaining years of their lives and in his Rise and Fall, Davis placed the blame for the loss of Vicksburg directly on Johnston because Johnston failed to assist Pemberton militarily. An understanding of the relationship between these two men will assist in understanding the dilemma in which Pemberton found himself during critical periods in the Campaign.

Animosity between Davis and Johnston began in earnest with a problem concerning a clarification of Johnston's rank. Johnston, after the first Manassas, was under the impression that he was a full general with the ranking position in the Army after the President.²² After an incident involving a

²¹Pemberton, p. 261.

²²This was because on 16 May 1861 the Confederate Congress raised the rank of all brigadier generals to that of full general. Since Johnston was the ranking brigadier, he naturally thought he was the senior officer in the army. (See Johnston, pp. 70-73)

replacement officer who was sent to him by General Lee (Lee apparently thought he ranked Johnston), Johnston became furious and wrote for clarification of his rank. Not until several months later was the matter settled; and at that, not in favor of Johnston. Davis, in violation of the law passed earlier by Congress, assigned different effective dates for the appointment to full general. As a result, Johnston was ranked fourth behind Cooper, A. S. Johnston, and Lee.

Johnston never fully understood his relationship with Pemberton and this further complicated the relationship between Davis and Johnston during the Vicksburg Campaign. The instructions Johnston received in November of 1862 placed him in charge of a large geographical command and indicated that he was to coordinate the efforts of Pemberton and Bragg in the Department of the West. These instructions,²³ however, were vague and if they are considered in light of his difficulties with Davis, it is not surprising that Johnston hesitated to act as the central commander responsible for military operations in both departments. He acted more as a distant coordinator than as a responsible commander, transferring troops when necessary but rarely issuing any clear, precise tactical commands. Orders and other instructions flowed from the Capital at Richmond directly to Pemberton and Bragg bypassing Johnston's headquarters at Chattanooga.

²³OR, XVII, Pt. 2, pp. 757-758.

The relationship was indeed a strange one. President Davis issued orders from one location without informing Johnston and Johnston in turn issued directions from his location without informing Davis.

Today military commanders invariably operate within a well defined chain of command. Pemberton was at a distinct disadvantage in this respect. He was never really sure who he worked for.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTING

"Skill in war consists in solving any difficulties that may make an operation difficult, not in allowing the operation to fail" - Napoleon¹

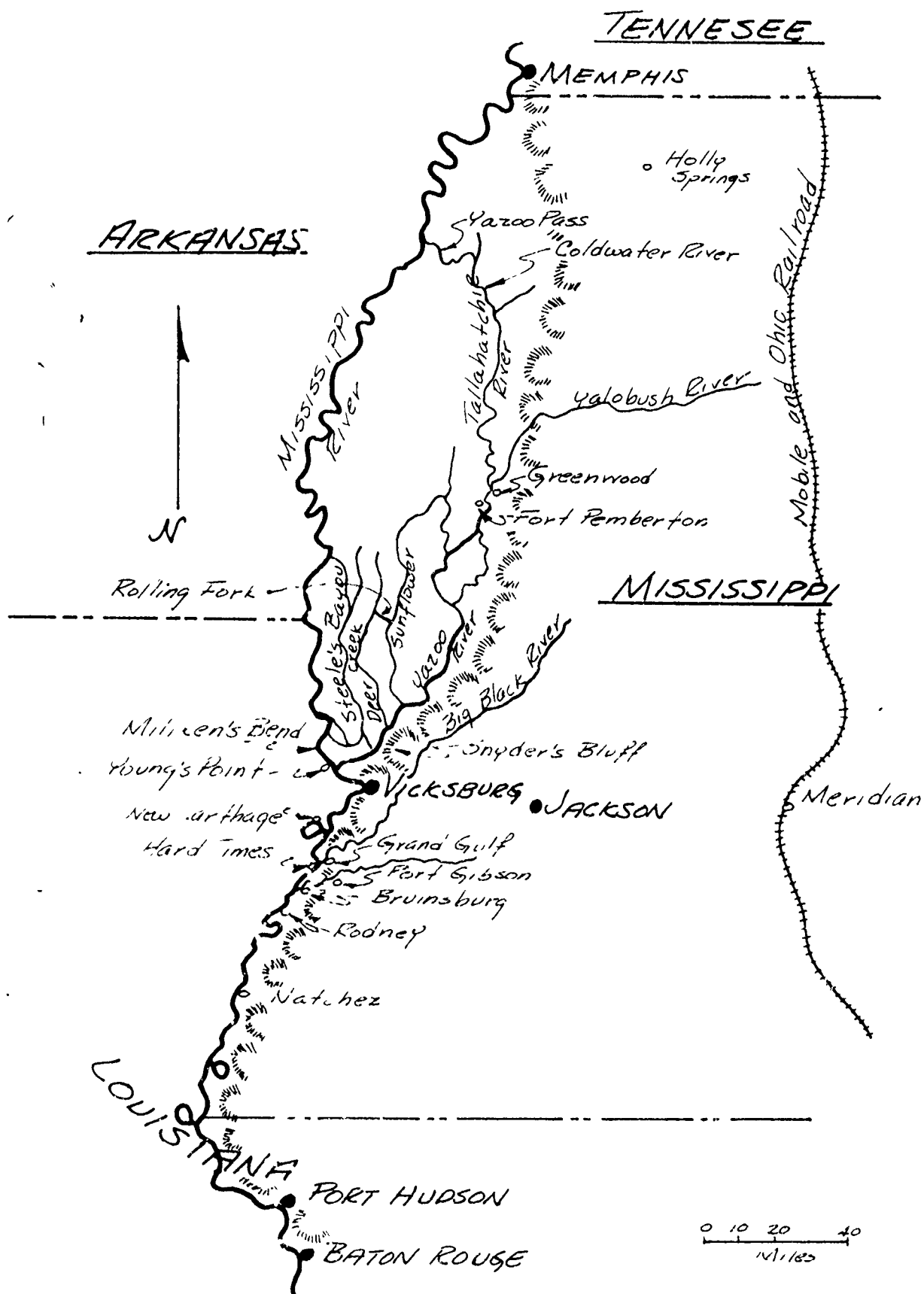
The defensive operations of General Pemberton's army in late 1862, and during the early months of 1863, were primarily directed against several Union attempts to secure Vicksburg from the river approaches to the north of the city. During this period his army was widely distributed along a line beginning at Greenwood, Mississippi, 100 miles north of the city, and continuing to the fortifications at Port Hudson, 130 miles to the south (see Figure 1). In addition, Pemberton had a portion of his army spread out along the northern border of Mississippi, concentrating against Federal probes from that direction.

The country around Vicksburg was ideally suited for the conduct of defensive operations. The city itself was located on a series of bluffs 200 feet above the Mississippi River making a frontal assault from the west a foolhardy venture. This same line of bluffs curved inland north of

¹ Marshal Ferdinand Foch, The Principles of War, trans. Hilaire Belloc (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd, 1918), p. 97, quoting Napoleon.

FIGURE 1
THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

Source: Vincent J. Esposito, West Point Atlas of American
Wars (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959),
Map 102.



the city and rejoined the Mississippi in the vicinity of Memphis. The terrain between the bluffs and the river was low and swampy and was interlaced with numerous rivers and streams. One of these rivers, the Yazoo, was a major obstacle. Of all the avenues of approach to Vicksburg, this swampy area was used most often by the Union forces. To the south of the city, the bluffs continued along the east bank of the Mississippi all the way to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Although spread out over a vast area, Pemberton's army occupied excellent terrain from which they could ward off Union assaults into Mississippi.

The initial attempt by the Union Army to open the Mississippi in the vicinity of Vicksburg began with a two pronged assault by Major General William T. Sherman and Major General Ulysses S. Grant which originated from Memphis, Tennessee. The overall scheme was for Sherman to attack the bluffs using the river approaches in the north and for Grant to move overland due south from Memphis. The operation was begun on December 20, 1862 but Grant's column soon ran into trouble. Pemberton's cavalry, under Major General Earl Van Dorn, disrupted Grants maneuver by hitting his supply base at Holly Springs in northern Mississippi. The Confederate forces destroyed or captured large quantities of rations, forage and ammunition during this raid and created havoc in the Union rear. Disheartened, Grant retired to Memphis to regroup and to repair the Memphis to Grand Junction railroad

which was also destroyed by the Confederates. During this retrograde operation Grant reduced the rations issued to his troops and instructed his officers to scour the countryside for food and forage. He was amazed to discover that the amount of food and forage existing in the area could sustain his force for two months.² This intelligence would later result in Grant's severing his supply lines during his final thrust for Vicksburg.

While Grant was moving back to Memphis, Sherman continued his move toward Vicksburg, unaware that the other prong of the attack had met misfortune. Sherman arrived on the Yazoo River eight miles north of the city on December 26, 1862. His objective was the high ground north of the city.

For three days the Union troops debarked the transports and then moved through the swamps and bayous to an area from which an assault against the bluffs could be made. On the twenty-ninth of December the Federals attacked but were beaten back with severe losses by a Confederate force under Brigadier General S. D. Lee.³ Sherman, also disheartened, withdrew up the Mississippi to Milliken's bend on the west bank.

²U. S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1885), I, p. 435.

³S. D. Lee, "The Campaign of Vicksburg," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, ed., Franklin L. Riley (Oxford, Miss: Mississippi Historical Society, 1900), III, pp. 22-23.

Following this Union failure, political pressure from Washington began to mount. Grant had no doubts concerning the importance of securing Vicksburg and the importance that that prize held for his status as commander of the Union forces in that area. Determined to drive the Confederates from Vicksburg, he began a new campaign and moved his base from Memphis to one on the west bank of the Mississippi at Youngs Point, Louisiana (see Figure 1). From this base Grant directed joint army/navy operations against the city from January through April, 1863. He made three unsuccessful attempts during this period, two were by way of the bayous north of the city and one was an attempt to bypass Vicksburg by digging a series of canals in the swampy terrain on the western side of the river.

The first Union effort from this new base was an amphibious operation oriented on the bluffs along the Yazoo River. In order to get to the Yazoo, the Union troops blasted a huge gap in the levee near Yazoo Pass (see Figure 1) on the east bank of the Mississippi. On the morning of February 7, Union boats moved through the gap and headed for the Coldwater and Tallahatchee Rivers. Grant believed that once these troops were on the Tallahatchee, they would be able to reach the Yazoo and move downriver to turn Pemberton's right flank at Snyder's Bluff north of the city.⁴

⁴Grant, pp. 446-450; and The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies [hereinafter cited as OR]. Prepared under direction of the Secretary of War pursuant to Act of Congress approved 16 June 1880 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1904), LXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 44-46.

To stop this Federal advance, Pemberton ordered one of his division commanders, Major General William Wing Loring, to move to the vicinity of Yazoo Pass and construct whatever fortifications were necessary. Loring accomplished his mission in a most effective manner. He constructed a strongpoint called Fort Pemberton on a narrow strip of land between the Tallahatchee and Yazoo Rivers. The fort was ideally located in that it dominated the only possible water route to the Yazoo River from Yazoo Pass. The Confederate artillery was layed in such a way that boats moving down the Tallahatchee were in the direct line of fire. Loring added to his defenses by obstructing the Tallahatchee with trees and rafts and by sinking a Confederate steamer in midstream.

Beginning on the eleventh of March, Loring held his ground against several Union assaults. Then on the night of the nineteenth of March, amid much confusion, the beaten Federals reloaded their boats and by the following morning had departed the area.⁵ Their advance had been stopped before it had even reached the Yazoo.

The second expedition by Grant's army was also directed against the bluffs near the southern end of the Yazoo. Around the middle of March 1863, Admiral David Porter together with Sherman's Corps attempted to reach the bluffs

⁵OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 397-398.

through a series of narrow streams and bayous which led to the Sunflower River, a tributary of the Yazoo. This expedition was stopped by Pemberton's forces near a small bayou called Rolling Fork which ran into the Sunflower. Here Admiral Porter's force was attacked by a band of Confederates. His boats, lined up in the narrow channel, were easy prey and were hit hard by Pemberton's troops. Porter came close to losing his small fleet. Sherman, at this time, was in the swamps trying with great difficulty to come to Porter's aid.

To add to the Union problems, the Confederates began felling trees into the stream behind the column of boats in order to block Porter's escape route. Porter concluded that there was only one sensible course of action and that was to extricate his force from the trap in which he found himself. After enormous difficulty, and with Sherman's help, who finally arrived on the scene, Porter escaped from the treacherous bayous and on March 24, arrived safely on the Mississippi.⁶ Grant's second attempt from the north had failed.

While these two northern assaults were being conducted the rest of Grant's force was busy digging canals on the west side of the Mississippi. These canals were designed to compliment the natural waterways which ran alongside the

⁶James Russell Soley, "Naval Operations in the Vicksburg Campaign," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, ed. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1887), III, p. 564.

river. Grant believed that these canals would create a passage through which the Union transports could pass from a point on the Mississippi above Vicksburg to a point on the river below the city. The Union boats would then avoid the main river and in turn, the big guns on the bluffs in front of the city. This canal digging toughened Grant's troops and kept them busy during the winter months, however, Grant never really had much hope for this course of action and consequently abandoned the idea.

Although none of these three Union attempts met with much success, they nevertheless caused Pemberton to keep his forces dispersed so that by the beginning of April 1863 his army was distributed basically as follows:

North of Vicksburg:

General Loring -

Grenada and vicinity	(7000 men)
Mobile and Ohio Railroad	(2000 men)

Vicksburg and vicinity:

General Stevenson -

Bluffs north of city	(22,000 men)
Grand Gulf south of city	

South of Vicksburg:

General Gardner -

Port Hudson	(16,000 men)
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Total -	47,000 men ⁷
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⁷Vincent J. Esposito (ed.) West Point Atlas of American Wars (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), map 102; this same reference shows Grant's army of 36,000 men

In addition to causing Pemberton to displace his forces, Grant's maneuvers may have had another important affect on the Confederate commander. Pemberton may have believed that future major assaults would come from the north.⁸ Consequently he was more oriented in that direction than in any other.

General Pemberton, at his headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, was aware of Grant's base of operations on the west bank of the Mississippi and although he was not sure what Grant had in mind, fully realized the importance of disrupting the Union base. But, Pemberton considered this an impossible task for his forces and on more than one occasion requested assistance from Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith who commanded the Confederate forces across the river in Louisiana. In one message to Smith dispatched on March 25, Pemberton revealed his belief concerning his ability to conduct any type of offensive operation: "My force is insufficient for offensive operations. I must stand on the defensive, at all events, until reenforcements reach me."⁹ Following this communication, Pemberton requested that Smith conduct an operation to sever Grant's line of communication which extended from Milliken's Bend to New Carthage

concentrated at Milikens Bend northeast of Vicksburg, General Banks with 20,000 near Baton Rouge and General Hurlbut north of Memphis with 62,000.

⁸Lee, pp. 23-24.

⁹S. A. Dorsey, Recollections of Henry Watkins Allen (New York: M. Doolady, 1866), pp. 205-206.

Louisiana, a distance of 30 to 40 miles. All of this pleading was in vain, Pemberton got no help from the forces west of the Mississippi. Not only did he fail to get help by way of a raid on Grant's rear, but failed to get much concrete intelligence pertaining to Grant's plans. It appears as though Pemberton was unaware of Grant's intentions for as late as the eleventh of April he sent a message to Johnston indicating that Grant was giving up his water operations and was in the process of moving back to Memphis.¹⁰ He had no idea that Grant was planning a drastic change in his modus operandi.

In April the weather became warmer and the early floods began to subside. The time was right for Grant's final and ultimately successful offensive to secure Vicksburg and open the Mississippi to Union shipping. Grant's final plan was to send Porter's fleet down the river past the Vicksburg batteries under cover of darkness and move two corps under Generals McPherson and McClelland through the Louisiana bayous to meet up with Porter on the Mississippi south of Vicksburg. From this point Porter could ferry the troops across the river to a point south of the city. A concentrated assault from the south, the direction from which they were least expected, could then be made.

Grant's scheme was opposed by several of his senior advisors, including Sherman. Sherman believed that the Union

¹⁰OR, XIV, Pt. 3, p. 733.

forces should continue to attack from the North of Vicksburg and if they did, success would come much sooner.¹¹ Fortunately for Grant, Admiral Porter, who was not a subordinate of the Union General, agreed with the plan and on the night of April 16, 1863, ran the Vicksburg batteries under cover of darkness. Ten of his boats made it through and six days later, six more boats ran past. Grant had all the transport he needed. His plan could be set in motion.

To take the pressure off this main attack, the Federals conducted three diversionary operations. The first such operation began early in April. A Union force under Major General Frederick Steele conducted a raid north of the city into an area from which the Confederates at Vicksburg obtained a significant quantity of supplies. The Confederates reacted to this threat by sending Brigadier General S. D. Lee with a reinforced brigade to the Deer Creek sector (see Figure 1). He was unable to stem the Yankee tide and as a result, the Union troops destroyed a large quantity of corn and carried off large numbers of livestock. Steele evacuated the area during the last week in April and returned to Miliken's Bend.

The second diversionary operation was also highly successful. Colonel Grierson with 1,700 horsemen, in an unprecedented cavalry raid for that time, swept out of

¹¹William T. Sherman, Memoirs of William T. Sherman (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), I, pp. 314-317.

Tennessee on April 17 and rode south through Mississippi tearing up the railroads and creating havoc on Pemberton's supply lines. Pemberton reacted by gathering up all the cavalry he had available¹² and sending them after Grierson. Pemberton also diverted Loring's division to the line of the Mobile and Ohio railroad in northern Mississippi in an attempt to stop this raid. Loring's forces, however, were not very effective against mounted troops.

There is no question that the one major resource Pemberton lacked, which was critical to the conduct of any type of offensive action, was cavalry. To alleviate this shortage, Pemberton impressed private horses for his infantry to use against Grierson even though there was much opposition from the local farmers.¹³ His inadequate cavalry force not only failed to stop Grierson, but being concentrated as they were against one force, failed to gain much intelligence on anything else in his department. Nevertheless, Pemberton continued to direct offensive operations against Grierson's troopers on several occasions.¹⁴

¹²On 13 January 1863, Pemberton, on instructions from General Johnston, ordered the bulk of his cavalry under Van Dorn to report to General Johnston for operations in connection with General Bragg in Tennessee. Pemberton was left with about one regiment of cavalry under Colonel Wirt Adams. (see: OR, XVII, Pt. 2, pp. 833-834.)

¹³OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 778; and John C. Pemberton, Pemberton, Defender of Vicksburg (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 101.

¹⁴OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 793, 797.

The final diversion began on April 30, 1863. For two days Union gun boats and infantry under the direction of General Sherman clashed with Confederate troops at Snyder's Bluffs north of the city. As will be seen, these Confederate troops were thus kept occupied at a critical period in the campaign.

Around the middle of April when Union activity was obviously increasing, Pemberton began to sense that a formidable operation against the city was imminent.¹⁵ The cavalry raid by Grierson and the raid by Steele had focused his attention once again to the north, but he was still aware of Grant's remaining force on the west bank of the river. On the seventeenth, just after he received word that the Union fleet had made it past the Vicksburg batteries, Pemberton revealed his fears in a message to Johnston dated the same day:

Enemy has now nine boats between Vicksburg and Port Hudson. He has land forces at New Carthage from Grant's army, and can reenforce them to any extent. He can use nine boats to cross his troops to this side.¹⁶

Believing then, that the main attack could come from either the north or south, but more than likely from the north, Pemberton was forced to operate in both directions. He lacked the intelligence he so desperately needed. His forces were weak at all points but were particularly weak south of Vicksburg.

¹⁵OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 745.

¹⁶OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 751-752.

One of Pemberton's division commanders, Brigadier General John S. Bowen, had the defense mission south of the city. His orders were to defend Grand Gulf against any possible assault from across the river. Bowen watched the Union situation develop and actually sent one of his commanders, Colonel F. M. Cockrell, across the river with a small force to operate against the enemy concentrations in that area. A night raid by Cockrell on some Union cavalry early in April was highly successful and he later reported intelligence to the effect that Grant was planning to cut off Vicksburg from the south.¹⁷ Oddly enough Cockrell's force was pulled back across the river by order of General Pemberton while it apparently was in a good position to gain additional intelligence.

By the end of April there was a marked increase in the activity of Grant's forces. Troops were being moved in all directions; Steele's division, after the successful raid on Pemberton's right flank, had returned to Miliken's Bend. But Sherman had taken his place and was moving in from the north to hit the same flank again. Grierson was still ravaging the countryside and Union troops were being concentrated at Hard Times getting ready to cross the Mississippi south of Vicksburg. Pemberton apparently had no idea that this latter activity was in fact Grant's main assault force for on April 28, in a message to Davis he called it a 'demonstration':

¹⁷OR, XXIV, pt. 3, pp. 735-736.

A demonstration is now being made in large force at Hard Times. It is indispensable that I have more cavalry. The approaches to Northern Mississippi are almost unprotected, and it is impossible to prevent these raids with Infantry.¹⁸

The next day, in a similar message to Johnston, Pemberton stated that unless he received more cavalry the enemy raids into Northern Mississippi could not be prevented.¹⁹

On the twenty-ninth Grant began his assault south of the city. The Union gunboats closed with the Confederate batteries at Grand Gulf while two divisions and a brigade from McClellan's corps waited in transports to assault the bluffs. The Union gunboats were unsuccessful in softening the batteries so that night Grant moved the operation farther south.²⁰

Early the next day, April 30, 1863, the Union troops made an unopposed landing at Bruinsburg, eight miles south of Grand Gulf, and rapidly drove eastward in order to reach the bluffs before the Confederates could throw them back into the river. Opposing this Union assault of over 20,000 men, was Brigadier General John S. Bowen with only about 5,000 Confederate troops.²¹

¹⁸OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 797.

¹⁹OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 805.

²⁰Charles A. Dana, Recollections of the Civil War (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), pp. 42-43.

²¹Charles E. Hooker, "Mississippi," Confederate Military History (1899) ed. C. A. Evans (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1962), VII, p. 135.

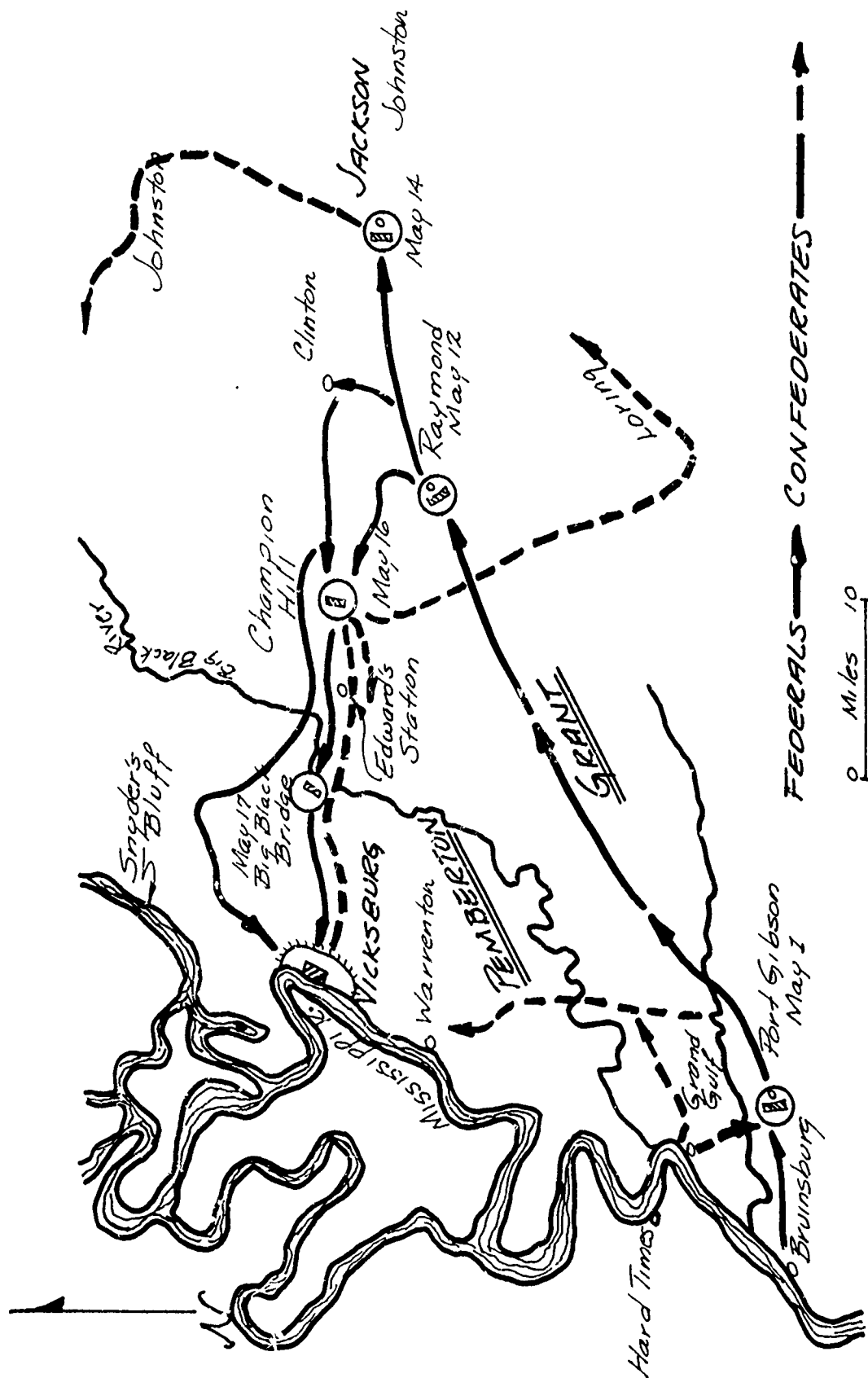
At 1:30 in the morning on the first of May the Union forward elements clashed with Bowen's advance positions east of Port Gibson and a heroic delaying action by the Confederates ensued. The final struggle for Vicksburg had begun.

In the next three weeks Grant was to move with lightening speed. He would go on from a victory at Port Gibson (see Figure 2) to one at Raymond and from there to Jackson where he quickly drove the Confederates from their fortifications west of the city. Following an easy victory at Jackson, he would then move toward Vicksburg and on the way to this ultimate objective, he would emerge the victor in two more battles, Champion Hill and the Big Black Bridge. Finally, on the eighteenth of May, only nineteen days after landing at Bruinsburg, he would have Pemberton sealed in Vicksburg. Following a forty-seven day siege of the city he would victoriously enter Vicksburg and finally see his long sought prize.

FIGURE 2

THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN

Source: Bruce Catton, Never Call Retreat (New York: Double-day and Company, 1965), pp. 272-273.



CHAPTER III

THE BATTLES PRIOR TO THE SIEGE

"The purpose [of the defense] is to break the strength of the attacker, to parry his blows, to weaken him and to bleed him white." - Von Leeb¹

Toward the end of April, General Bowen became increasingly concerned over the Union activity across the river from Grand Gulf. His scouts reported heavy concentrations of Union troops on the west bank near Hard Times and he of course was aware of the passage of the Vicksburg batteries by Porter's fleet. As early as April 27 Bowen began requesting reinforcements to augment his meager force and also gave Pemberton a fairly accurate estimate of possible events in the Grand Gulf area:

I have the honor to report that all the movements of the enemy during the last twenty-four hours seem to indicate an intention on their part to march their army still lower down in Louisiana, perhaps to Saint Joseph, and then to run their steamers by me and cross to Rodney . . .²

¹Field Marshall General Ritter Von Leeb, Defence, trans. Dr. Stephan T. Possony and Daniel Vilfray (Harrisburg, Pa: Military Service Publishing Company, 1943), p. viii.

²The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies [hereinafter cited as OR], prepared under direction of the Secretary of War pursuant to Act of Congress approved 16 June 1880 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1904), XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 792.

Pemberton responded by asking Bowen if he could hold with what he had or if he needed more troops. Bowen asked for all that Pemberton could spare.

The analysis of Grant's intentions was very close to being correct. In fact, Bowen's only error was with respect to the east bank landing site. He was not far wrong, however, because Rodney is only eight miles south of Bruinsburg, the point where Grant actually did land his army.

Pemberton's actions during the final days of April were directed almost entirely against Grierson and his 1,700 horsemen rather than the larger force opposite Bowen. He did not completely ignore Bowen, however, because on April 28 he told Major General C. L. Stevenson who was commanding troops in and around Vicksburg, to send 5,000 men to Grand Gulf if Bowen asked for them. Stevenson did not agree with this course of action for he did not believe that the Union force opposite Grand Gulf was the main one. He thought that they were there merely to "lay waste the country on that side" and that the Union maneuver on the west bank was "a feint to withdraw troops from a main attack here [north of Vicksburg]."³

Bowen's reinforcements were finally sent and arrived late on the thirtieth of May and early on the morning of the first. These troops, consisting of two brigades led by Brigadier Generals E. D. Tracy and William E. Baldwin,

³OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 800.

reached Bowen in time to take part in the battle of Port Gibson but they were weak and exhausted after a long forced march from Vicksburg.⁴ The delay in sending the reenforcements was apparently a result of Sherman's ruse north of the city, but even though they arrived late and exhausted, they fought heroically and helped save Bowen's forces from being decimated.

BATTLE OF PORT GIBSON - (1 MAY 1863)

Although the Confederate forces were possibly aware of some Union troops landing on the east bank as early as 5:00 PM on the twenty-ninth of April,⁵ it was not until 1:00 AM on the first of May that the Confederates made contact. Grant thus had ample time to get his troops across the river and onto the bluffs. This was of great importance to the Union commander for he was highly vulnerable to defeat in detail as long as ferrying operations continued.

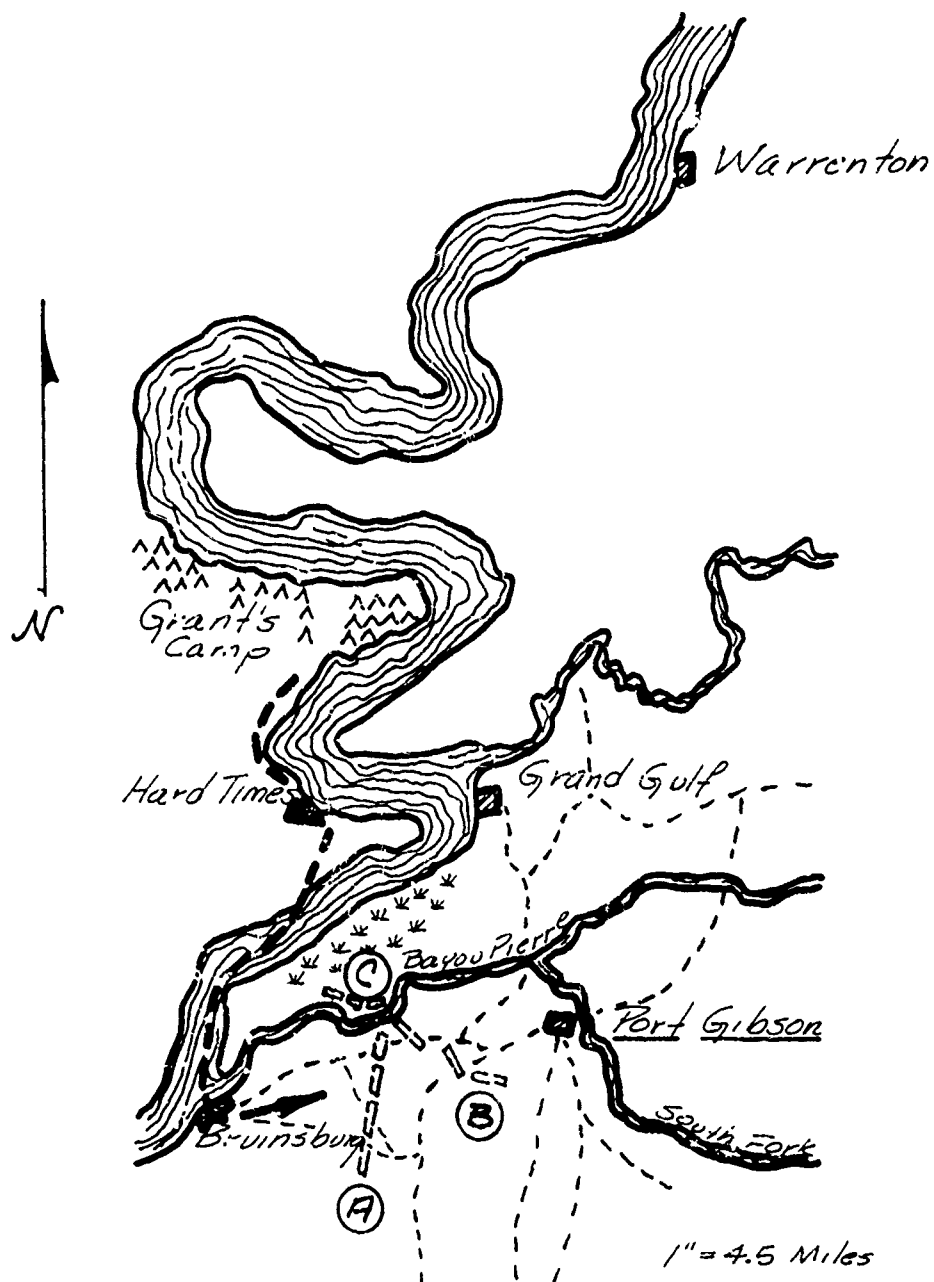
Skirmishing began early on the first between a large Union force under Major General John A. McClernard and 1,000 Confederates under Brigadier General Martin E. Green who on Bowen's order, had set up a defensive line along the road between Bruinsburg and Port Gibson (see Figure 3). Green's men held off the Yankees until around 10:00 AM when fresh

⁴R. S. Bevier, History of the First and Second Missouri Confederate Brigades 1861-1865 (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand and Company, 1879), p. 176.

⁵Bevier, p. 175.

FIGURE 3
BATTLE OF PORT GIBSON

Source: OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 665.



A- First line of battle
 B- Second line of battle
 C- 1st Mo. & part of
 Greens brigade

Union troops forced them back towards Port Gibson.

As Green withdrew, Baldwin, who had arrived with the exhausted reinforcements from Vicksburg, was ordered to form a new line about one mile to Green's rear. Green was then ordered to assist General Tracy who had also arrived from Vicksburg and who had taken a position to the right of Baldwin. After the Confederates had established their new positions, the Federals attacked. For the next several hours bitter fighting took place all along the line and at times there was danger of Bowen's flanks being turned by the Federals. Bowen's position was desperate. Running low on ammunition and outnumbered three to one, he decided to attempt a counterattack in order to turn Grant's right flank. Between 1:00 and 2:00 PM the attack was launched. Under Bowen's personal direction, the furious assault was almost successful but after routing two brigades of enemy troops, the Confederates were stopped by a third and had to give up their limited offensive.⁶ Bowen's attack did give the Confederates time, however, and caused the enemy to slow down their activities for the rest of the afternoon.

At dusk the enemy attacked again and Bowen was overwhelmed by the masses of fresh Union troops who kept pouring into the battle from the base at Bruinsburg. Against impossible odds, he withdrew from the fight and moved north across the Bayou Pierre.⁷ Bowen's force during the battle of

⁶OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 663-664.

⁷OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 663-664.

Port Gibson numbered only 5,164 men while the Union force opposing them was almost 20,000 strong.⁸ It is a wonder that Bowen held them off as long as he did.

After Bowen's defeat at Port Gibson, Pemberton realized the seriousness of his predicament and tried to concentrate his forces for the defense of Vicksburg. He ordered Loring's division to return to Vicksburg and on the seventh of May, ordered Major General Gardner to bring 5,000 men from Port Hudson to Jackson. He also began to recall the troops that he had sent north at an earlier date to help General Bragg. All of these efforts were in vain. Pemberton was too late. Grant was ready to attack with a concentrated army while Pemberton had his spread out in all directions.

In order to fully understand Pemberton's dilemma during the first week of May, it is necessary to examine certain messages that he received from Johnston and Davis during this period. On May 2, Johnston advised Pemberton that "If Grant crosses, unite all your troops to beat him. Success will give back what was abandoned to win it."⁹ At the time Johnston sent this message he was unaware that Grant had landed and had beaten the Confederates at Port Gibson. Pemberton's attempts to concentrate his army, nevertheless, were endorsed by Johnston in Chattanooga. Five days later, however, Pemberton received another message pertaining to

⁸OR, X/IV, Pt. 1, pp. 143, 664.

⁹OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 239.

his defensive plans; this one was from Davis. Part of Davis' message told Pemberton that ". . . To hold Vicksburg and Port Hudson is necessary to a connection with Trans-Mississippi."¹⁰

The following day Pemberton sent a message to Gardner to

". . . Return with 2,000 troops to Port Hudson, and hold it to the last. President says both places must be held."¹¹

Thus, after Pemberton received the message from Davis, he was convinced that the President did not want his army wandering about looking for Grant but rather to remain close to Vicksburg and Port Hudson so as to prevent their capture. From that time on, then, Pemberton was oriented more on the retention of terrain than on attacking his enemy. His operational plans after the seventh of May began to differ from Johnston's, but at the same time were favorable to what Davis had in mind. This fixation on retaining terrain, rather than attacking Grant's forces, affected his decisions for the rest of the Campaign and must have subdued any inclination he may have had to employ offensive tactics.

While Pemberton was gathering his forces and organizing his defenses near the Big Black River, Grant was preparing a daring offensive operation. By May 7, he had moved across the Bayou Pierre behind Bowen and had established his bridgehead at Grand Gulf. On that date Grant had a force of 41,000 men on the east side. He was ready to resume the

¹⁰OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 842.

¹¹OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 845.

offensive and strike inland for Vicksburg and on the eighth of May the offensive began. In a daring move Grant cut loose from his supply base and headed northeast to sever the east-west railroad at Edward's Station.¹² Grant moved out of his bridgehead with the Army of Tennessee in three columns, Major General John A. McClernand's corps on the left, Major General William T. Sherman's in the center and Major General James B. McPherson's on the right.

BATTLE OF RAYMOND - (12 MAY 1863)

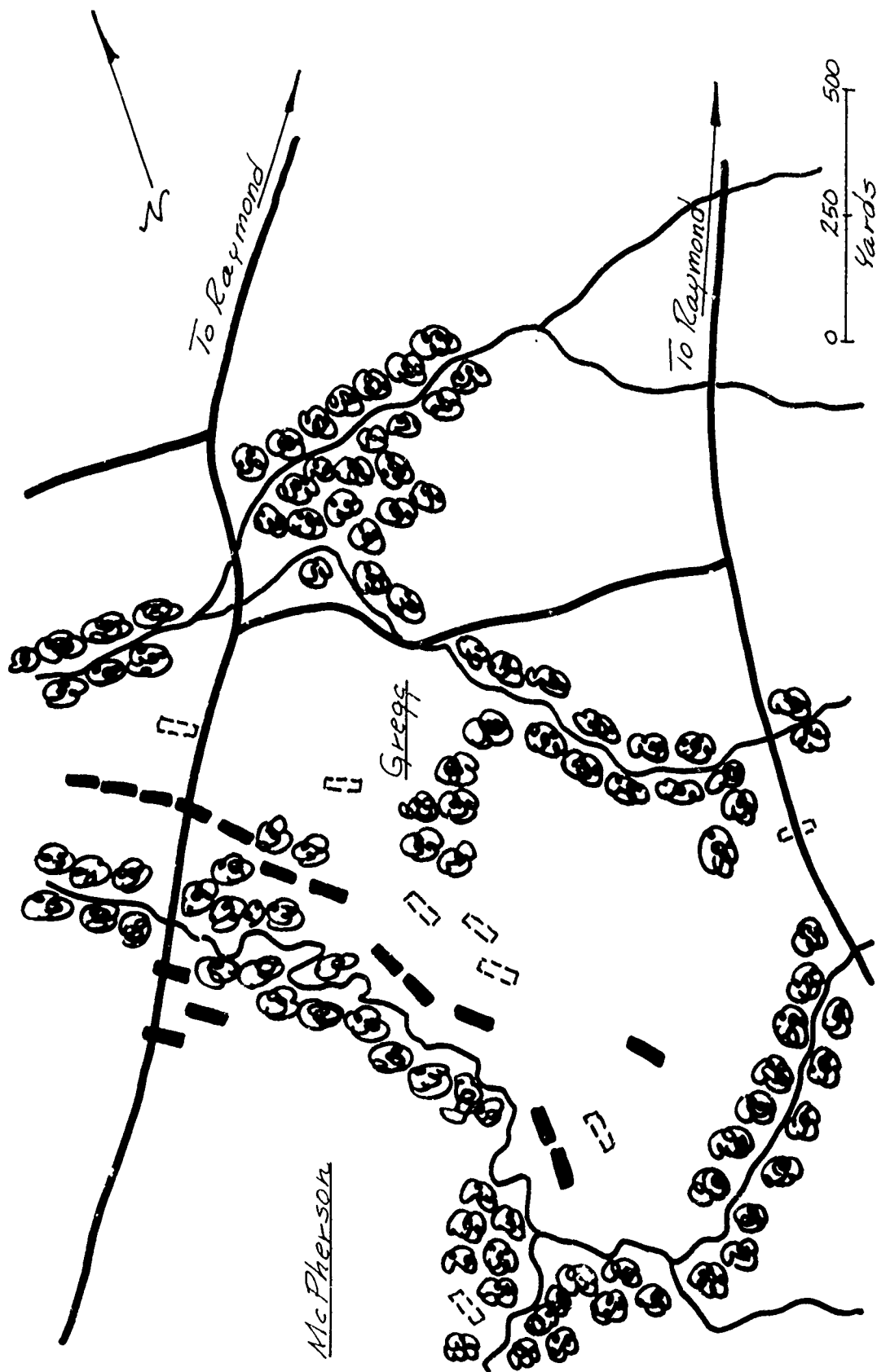
On the twelfth of May both Sherman and McClernand's columns clashed with Confederate pickets who were guarding the crossings at Fourteen Mile Creek just south of the railroad. However, this activity did not develop into a significant battle because neither the Union nor the Confederate troops attacked in force. McPherson, on the other hand, who was leading the right column, was further to the east and was hit hard by a brigade sized force under Brigadier General John Gregg. A fierce battle in the vicinity of Raymond (see Figure 4) resulted.

Gregg had been ordered by Pemberton to move from Jackson to Raymond in order to guard supplies and assist in

¹²U.S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1885), I, p. 411; Grant claims that he cut loose from his base of supplies on May 8 but on the eleventh and twelfth of May heavily guarded supply wagons were brought forward from Grand Gulf. Most of these wagons contained ammunition. (see: OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 296, 306).

FIGURE 4
BATTLE OF RAYMOND

Source: Struggle for Vicksburg, editors of Civil War Times,
Historical Times Inc., (Harrisburg, Pa: Stackpole
Books, 1967), p. 34.



delaying the Union columns.¹³ This directive was somewhat offensive in nature and was one of the few sent by Pemberton that actually ordered one of his commanders to go and meet an advancing Yankee force. However, Pemberton did not intend for Gregg to attack if the Union advance was too strong and told Gregg to withdraw to Jackson if that were the case. As a matter of fact, Pemberton, in a comment after the Campaign, stated that the Battle of Raymond was the result of Gregg's disobedience for he did not want Gregg to attack if the Union force was too large.¹⁴

Gregg's attack on the Union forces at Raymond was actually the result of poor intelligence for had he known the size of the force he assaulted, he may have conducted his operation differently. After the first message to Gregg, Pemberton sent another indicating that the bulk of the Union army was most likely advancing on Edward's Station and as a result, Gregg thought that the enemy his scouts were reporting near Raymond was only a brigade on a "marauding expedition."¹⁵ The Confederate scouts gave weight to this belief by reporting the strength of this enemy force at around 3,000 men. Based on this information, Gregg closed with the Federals near Raymond but soon found out that the Yankee force was a sizeable one, for in fact it was the Union corps led by McPherson.

¹³OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 851, 856.

¹⁴S.A. Dorsey, Recollections of Henry Watkins Allen (New York: M. Doolady, 1866), p. 195.

¹⁵OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 737.

Around 10:00 AM on the twelfth of May, the Confederates began an artillery barrage on the advancing Union column. This caused the enemy troops to deploy in the woods alongside the road two and one half miles west of Raymond. As the Union troops deployed, Gregg moved a fixing force in front of them and then hit the Union right flank with a main attack. For a while he succeeded, for in the dust and smoke the Union troops began to fall back in confusion. Gregg's success was shortlived, however, for the Yankee defense hardened and bitter fighting developed as the Federals stood their ground.

Shortly after noon Gregg realized that the opposing force was far superior to his and by 1:30 found himself on the receiving end of a massive Union counterattack. Gregg's position was hopeless, his men began falling back in small groups so a general withdrawal was ordered. The Confederates moved to a bivouac site five miles east of the battlefield and the next day moved back to Jackson. McPherson's corps moved into the city and occupied Raymond that night.¹⁶

Gregg's attack was unsuccessful in terms of battlefield victory, but it did have an effect on Grant's plans. Because of the fury with which the Confederates hit McPherson, Grant believed that a formidable enemy force was located in Jackson. He had been getting reports all along that General Johnston was on his way to Mississippi and believed that this attack at Raymond was by an advance force from a larger one

¹⁶OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 736-739.

commanded by Johnston in the Jackson area. As a result, Grant changed his plans. Instead of going after Pemberton's force in the vicinity of Edward's Station, he decided to head for Jackson in order to break up any Confederate concentration in that area.¹⁷

Late on the twelfth of May Grant ordered both McPherson and Sherman to head directly for the city of Jackson. McClelland, who was still skirmishing with Confederate troops south of Edward's Station, was ordered to break contact and proceed to Raymond to bring up the Union rear.

While all this activity was taking place around Raymond, Pemberton was trying to determine what the enemy was up to. At first he thought that Grant would continue to press the Confederate positions on the Big Black River but by the morning of the thirteenth he had received conclusive evidence from Loring that the enemy was moving to Jackson: "From every source, both black and white, I learn that the enemy are marching on Jackson. I think there can be no doubt of this."¹⁸

On the morning of the thirteenth the army immediately available to Pemberton, which at that time was located in the Edward's Station area, numbered 16,000 officers and men.¹⁹

¹⁷Grant, p. 499.

¹⁸OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 875.

¹⁹Charles E. Hooker, "Mississippi," Confederate Military History (1899) ed. C.A. Evans, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1962), VII, p. 139.

This was a sizeable force which could inflict serious damage on Grant's army if Pemberton knew where Grant's weakest point was. Lacking detailed intelligence, which he so desperately needed, Pemberton missed an opportunity to seize the initiative by attacking a vulnerable force. For unknown to Pemberton, McClelland had a force of only three divisions (13,000 men) located four miles south of Edwards Station when Grant ordered him to break contact.²⁰ This force was being held off by 16,000 Confederate troops and for a period of time on the thirteenth, the Confederates did nothing while McClelland withdrew his corps from the area. As a result of poor intelligence at the high command level, the Confederates failed to seize the initiative and attack a vulnerable Union force. McClelland broke contact intact and moved southeast toward Jackson.²¹

BATTLE OF JACKSON - (14 MAY 1863)

A change in Confederate organization in the immediate area of Vicksburg took place on the thirteenth of May, for on that day General Joseph E. Johnston arrived in the city of Jackson. Johnston had been ordered by Secretary of War Seddon, who was justifiably concerned over the situation around Vicksburg, to:

²⁰OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 146-147.

²¹OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 874-875; and Pt. 1, p. 261.

Proceed at once to Mississippi and take chief command of the forces, giving to those in the field as far as practicable, the encouragement and benefit of your personal direction. Arrange to take for temporary service with you, or to be followed without delay 3,000 good troops, who will be substituted in General Bragg's army by a large number of prisoners recently returned from the Arkansas Post capture, and reorganized, now on their way to General Pemberton. Stop them at the point most convenient to join General Bragg. You will find reenforcements from General Beauregard to General Pemberton and more may be expected.²²

On the thirteenth, then, there were two senior Confederate officers in the vicinity of Vicksburg and, according to the message from Seddon, Johnston was in overall command. As will be seen, however, neither Pemberton nor Johnston did much to support each other.

When Johnston arrived in Jackson he discovered that the forces there were woefully inadequate to even defend the city, let alone take on Grant who at that time was moving rapidly towards him. Johnston soon grasped the seriousness of the situation and upon receiving intelligence that a portion of Grant's army was in the vicinity of Clinton, sent an urgent directive to Pemberton to move with haste and attack these Union troops.²³ The message was given to three different couriers, one of whom, unfortunately, was a Union agent.

²²OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 215.

²³Joseph E. Johnston, "Jefferson Davis and the Mississippi Campaign," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, ed. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1887), III, p. 479.

As the Union agent rode to Grant's army, the Confederate couriers headed for Pemberton over different routes. On the morning of the fourteenth one of these couriers reached Pemberton's headquarters at Edward's Station. After reading Johnston's message, Pemberton drafted the following reply:

. . . I move at once with whole available force about 16,000 leaving Vaughn's brigade, about 1,500, at Big Black Bridge. Tilghman's brigade, 1,500, now at Baldwin's Ferry, I have ordered to bring up the rear of my column. He will be, however, from 15 to 20 miles behind it. To hold Vicksburg are Smith's and Forney's divisions, extending from Snyder's to Warrenton numbering, effective, 7,500 men. . . The men have been marching several days, are much fatigued and, I fear, will straggle very much. In directing this move, I do not think you fully comprehend the position that Vicksburg will be left in, but I comply at once with your order.²⁴

Pemberton then sent off a series of telegrams informing certain designated commanders to begin moving their troops toward Edward's Station and for others, notable Brigadier General John C. Vaughn, to remain in the trenches guarding the Big Black Bridge.

Shortly after these messages were sent, Pemberton began to wonder if his superior really understood the situation. The message from Johnston indicated that there were four divisions under General Sherman at Clinton. Pemberton thought, then, that he had been ordered to attack 20,000 Union troops, a force which would be greater than the 16,000 which he had decided to move. Another reason why Pemberton had second thoughts was that he knew a large number

²⁴OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 877.

of Union troops (McClelland's corps) were located near Raymond and that if the Confederates moved to Clinton, they would be farther from Vicksburg than this large Yankee force. Pemberton decided, therefore, that the course of action which his superior directed was unwise and took it upon himself to disregard Johnston's orders. He directed his forces to cease preparations for a forward move and called a council of war.²⁵

Pemberton briefed his generals on Johnston's plan during this conference but then presented his own concern for the safety of Vicksburg. He stated that if they marched on Clinton they would be vulnerable to defeat and that this defeat was likely to occur. There was, of course, some basis for Pemberton's concern. He knew Grant had three corps moving about the countryside and that any one Confederate force in the immediate area was greatly outnumbered. If the message from Davis concerning the holding of Vicksburg is considered then it is understandable that Pemberton hesitated to move out into the country east of Edward's Station and expose his army.

The majority of the generals present disagreed with Pemberton's ideas and voiced their support of Johnston's plan. Most of the officers wanted to take offensive action and go after Grant rather than remain on the defensive.²⁶

²⁵OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 261.

²⁶OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 261.

One of those present was Major General William Wing Loring, an aggressive commander who had many years of battle experience. Loring proposed a new plan which differed from Johnston's but was still offensive in nature. He suggested that instead of hitting Grant's strength, the Confederates should strike his weakness which they all thought at the time was the Union lines of communication.²⁷

Pemberton was reluctant to accept even this idea since it would also require a move away from Vicksburg. Several of the other officers present, however, agreed with Loring's plan so Pemberton realized that his men were anxious for a fight. He concluded that although Loring's proposal would give his men the fight they wanted, it would not involve as much risk as Johnston's. Pemberton decided to adopt the plan and strike Grant's lines of communication.²⁸

A message was sent to Johnston informing him of the change in plans and this was received by Johnston on the fourteenth. On reading the message the senior Confederate commander became furious for not only would this move violate orders, but it would further separate his small force from Pemberton's. The problems between these two officers began to develop at this point and the end result was a complete lack of cooperation between the two for the remaining weeks of the Campaign.

²⁷Dorsey, pp. 215-216.

²⁸OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 261.

While Johnston fumed over Pemberton's insubordination, Grant was pressing the defenses around Jackson. Early on the fourteenth, in a heavy rain, Sherman's and McPherson's Corps approaching from Clinton and Raymond respectively, moved toward Jackson (see Figure 5). But unknown to the Union Commanders, the city of Jackson was already being evacuated. Having noted the meager force available to defend the city, Johnston himself had departed at 3:00 AM that same morning and had left General Gregg behind with orders to hold off the Union columns long enough to permit the complete withdrawal and evacuation of supplies.²⁹ While Johnston withdrew north on the Canton road, Gregg's troops moved into position to meet the Yankees.³⁰

Gregg's men first made contact with McPherson's corps along the Clinton road. It was raining at the time and only brief skirmishing took place. But by 11:00 AM the miserable weather began to clear whereupon McPherson's troops assaulted the Confederate defenses. After a valiant attempt to hold them off, the Confederates withdrew behind the outer defenses of the city and waited for McPherson's next assault.

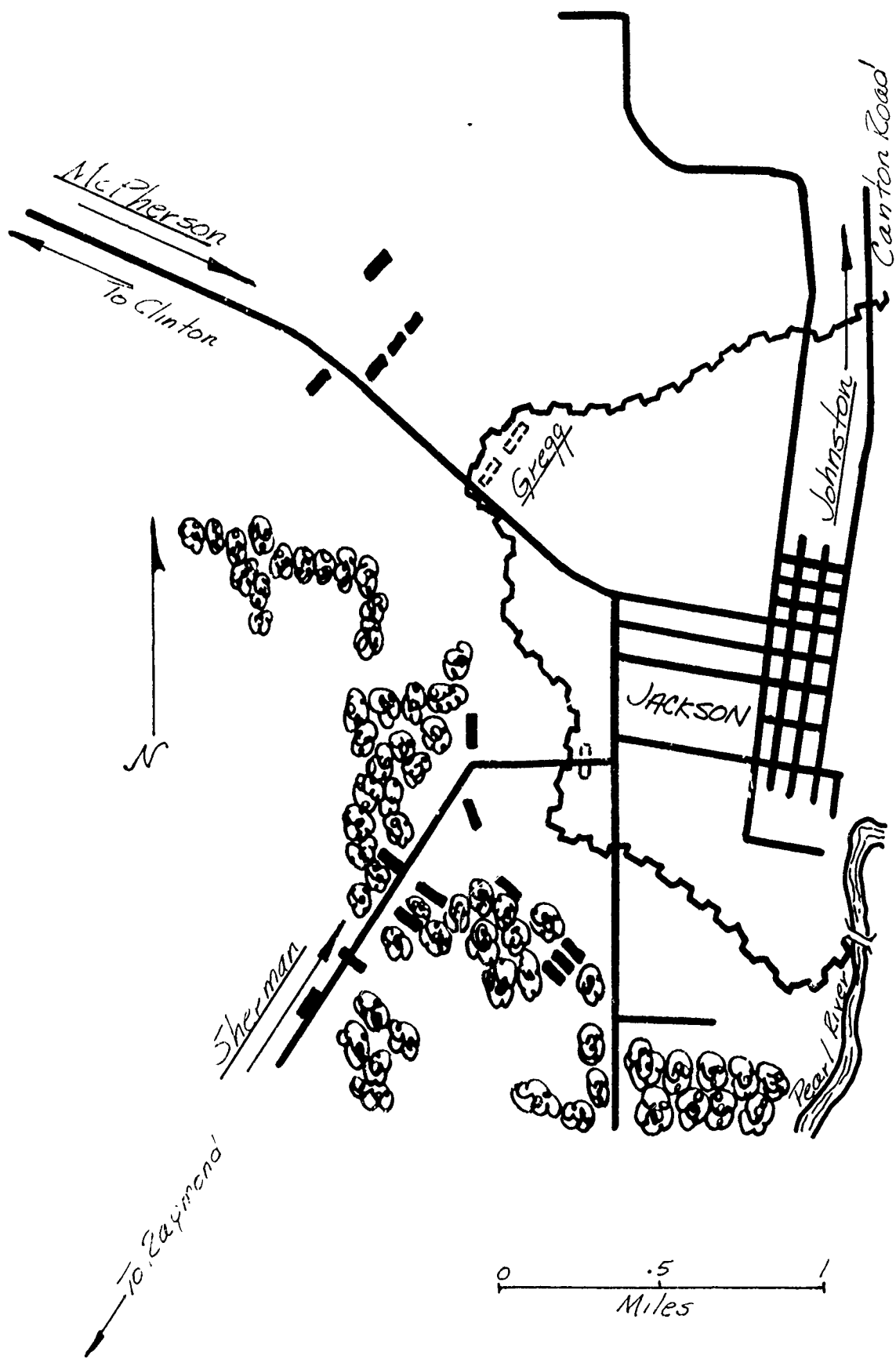
Meanwhile, Sherman's column, advancing down the Raymond road, was engaged by Gregg's artillery. The artillery

²⁹ Edwin C. Bearss, Decision in Mississippi (Little Rock Arkansas: Pioneer Press, 1962), p. 309; Bearss concluded that because of Jackson's importance as a strategic rail center, through which all Confederate war material for Vicksburg and points further south had to pass, Johnston's decision to give up Jackson was probably the greatest blunder of the Vicksburg Campaign.

³⁰OR, XLIV, Pt. 1, pp. 785-786.

FIGURE 5
BATTLE OF JACKSON

Source: Struggle for Vicksburg, p. 35.



duel which resulted was shortlived however, for Sherman directed more heavy guns into the contest and then managed to get one of his units in behind an unguarded section of the Confederate defenses. Minor fighting took place for several hours and a general standoff resulted which lasted until early in the afternoon. At about 2:00 PM, however, Gregg received word that the supply wagons had safely evacuated the city. His mission accomplished, Gregg broke contact and withdrew out of Jackson to join Johnston.

The Federals soon discovered that the defenses around the city were no longer manned and moved in unopposed to secure this vital communications center. Throughout the rest of the day and into the night Grant's troops burnt anything of value to the Confederate army and also began tearing up the railroad yards in the center of the town. The battle for Jackson was without question their easiest of the Campaign.

Late in the afternoon that same day, Grant received a copy of Johnston's earlier message to Pemberton. The Union agent had delivered it to McPherson who in turn had given it to Grant. The Union commander thought this message was the key to the Confederate plan of operations and immediately began concentrating his army.³¹ He had no idea that the order would be disobeyed by Pemberton.

³¹S. D. Lee, "The Campaign of Vicksburg," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, ed. Franklin L. Riley (Oxford, Miss: Mississippi Historical Society, 1900), III, pp. 33-34; and Grant, I, pp. 508-509.

Grant moved his forces rapidly and by evening on May 15, had seven divisions concentrated in the vicinity of Bolton and Raymond. Grant's plan was for this force to advance toward Edward's Station the next day in order to meet Pemberton's army as it moved toward Clinton.³² That night Grant set up his headquarters at Clinton. His army rested, unaware that the most decisive engagement of the Campaign would be fought the next day.

Earlier on the fifteenth, back at Edward's Station, Pemberton's army prepared to move out and sever Grant's supply lines. The plan called for an early morning departure, however an embarrassing problem confronted Pemberton that morning. He was informed that there were insufficient rations and ammunition stockpiled at Edwards to support the thrust on the Union supply lines. As a result, the march was postponed until these stores could be brought forward from Vicksburg.³³

Five hours after the scheduled departure, the Confederate columns left Edward's Station. They moved down the muddy road for only two miles when once again a major problem was encountered. The planned crossing site on Baker's Creek could not be used due to the Creek's "swollen condition."³⁴ Neither troops nor artillery could get across but on Loring's suggestion the army was marched up the right bank of the

³²Lee, pp. 34-35.

³³Bearss, p. 232.

³⁴OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 74.

Creek to the Jackson road bridge which was still intact. Apparently, while the troops were standing around during the morning waiting for rations, their officers had been idle for no one had thought to conduct a reconnaissance of the designated crossing site.³⁵ More valuable time was lost.

Loring crossed his men over the bridge and upon reaching the Raymond road, marched to the southeast. As dusk was approaching his scouts began to report that Union troops were concentrated near the Bolton road. At the time Pemberton's column was not very organized and was spread out over a long route of march. Rather than risk a night engagement, Pemberton decided to bivouac his scattered column.

It was almost midnight on the fifteenth before Pemberton's exhausted army finally settled down. The long day's march had been a sad affair; many mistakes had been made, but the mistakes of the next day were to be even greater. The Confederate troops, bedding down for the night could see in the distance the bright glow of the Union campfires less than three miles away.³⁶

BATTLE OF CHAMPION HILL - (16 MAY 1863)

At 5:00 AM on the sixteenth of May, Peter McCardle, and William Hennessey, two workers on the Southern Railroad of Mississippi, were shown into Grant's tent. These two

³⁵Bearss, pp. 232-233.

³⁶OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 114.

civilians informed Grant that they had been through Edward's Station the previous night and that a large Confederate army consisting of 80 regiments of infantry and 10 batteries of artillery was gathering there. They estimated the total strength of this force at about 25,000 men.³⁷

Upon hearing this news, Grant dispatched a message for Sherman to rush a division of reenforcements from Jackson and then ordered McPherson and McClernand to move their commands forward toward Edward's Station. All of this was accomplished in the early morning hours and by 6:00 AM McClernand's corps was on the road. McPherson started out soon after.

The two corps moved toward Edwards in three separate columns; McPherson along the Jackson road and McClernand's corps along the Middle and Raymond roads (see Figure 6). Grant's orders to both of these commanders were to "move cautiously with skirmishers to the front to feel for the enemy."³⁸ He was not yet sure which way the Confederates would move.

At about 7:00 AM McClernand's corps was taken under fire by Confederate pickets who were guarding a roadblock on

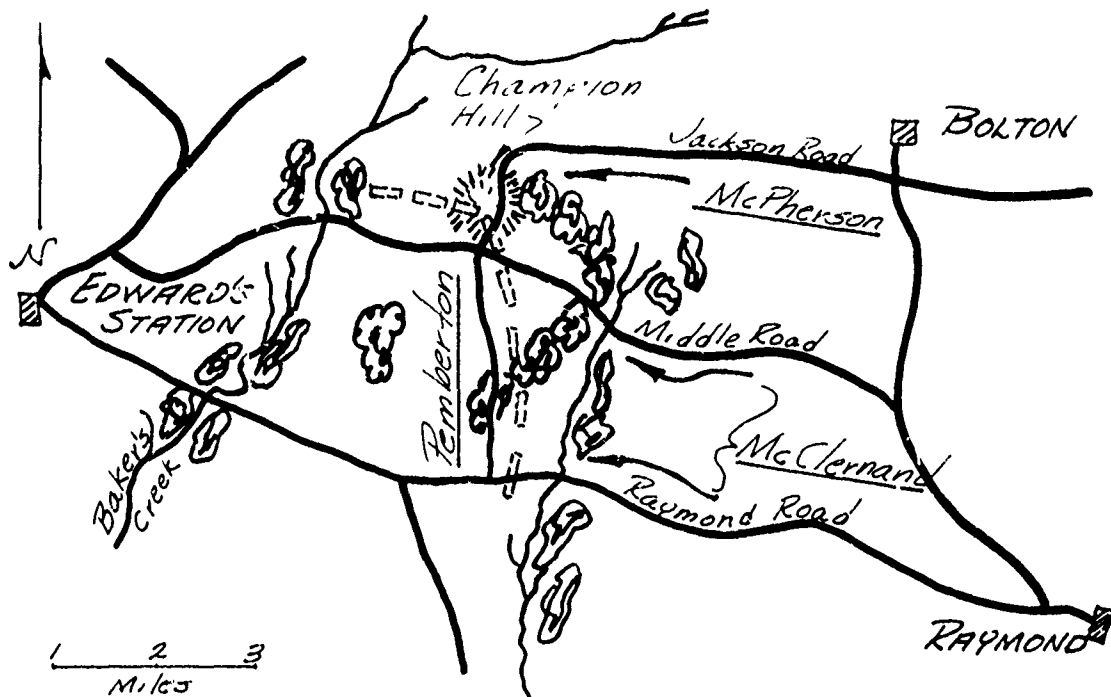
³⁷James H. Wilson, "A Staff Officers Journal of the Vicksburg Campaign, April 30 to July 4, 1863," Journal of the Military Service Institution (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co, 1908), XL III, p. 107; also OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 51-52; and Ulysses S. Grant, "The Vicksburg Campaign," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, III, p. 509.

³⁸U.S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant, I, p. 512.

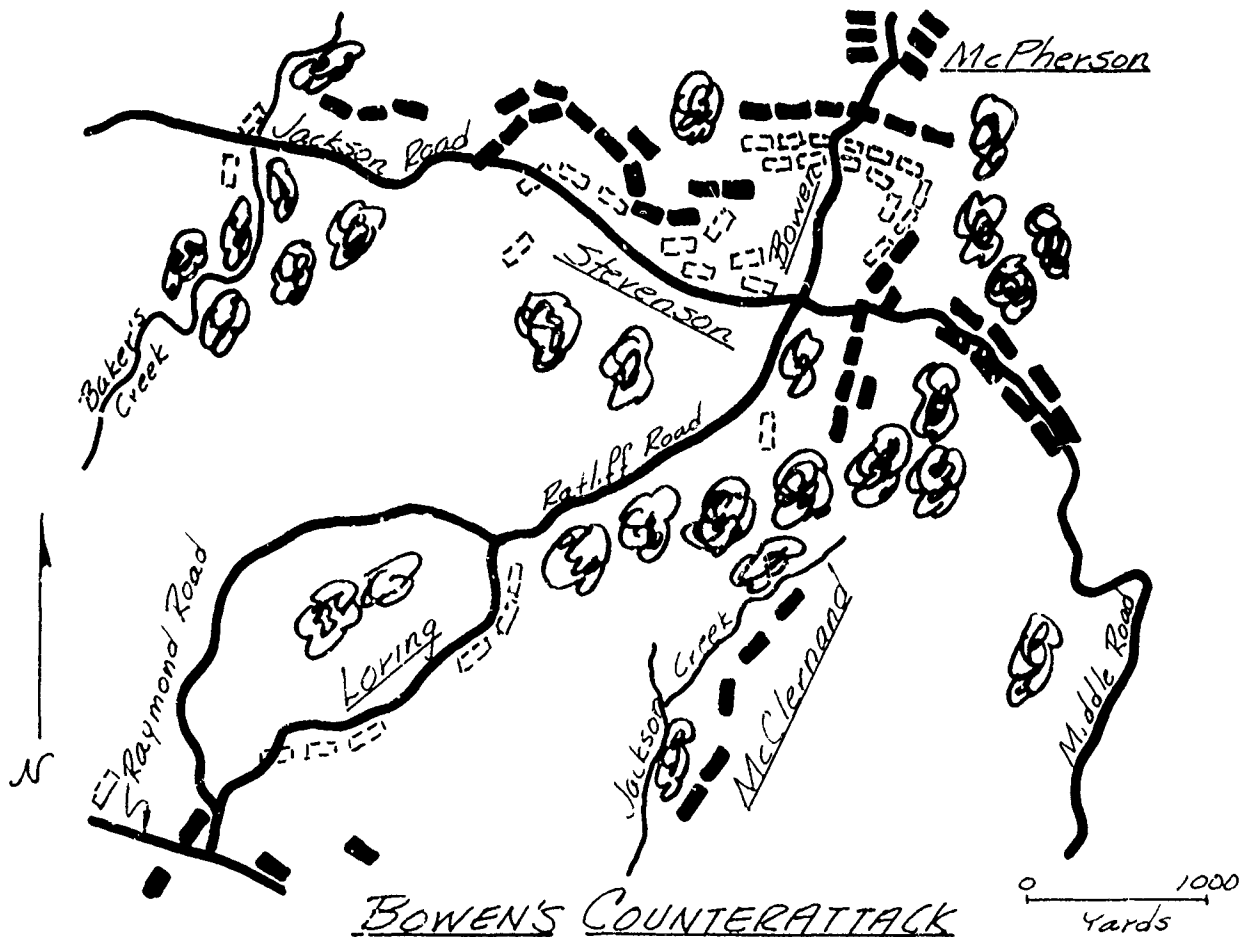
FIGURE 6

BATTLE OF CHAMPION HILL

Source: Struggle for Vicksburg, p. 37 and Mathew Forney
Steele, American Campaigns (Washington: Byron S.
Adams, 1909), II, p. 221.



INITIAL POSITIONS



BOWEN'S COUNTERATTACK

the Raymond road. Pemberton was soon made aware of this contact by Colonel Wirt Adams, his cavalry commander who came riding up to the Confederate headquarters during Pemberton's morning briefing. Adams told Pemberton that a Yankee force was advancing in large numbers along the Raymond road.³⁹ Before Pemberton had decided what to do about this immediate threat, a courier arrived with a message from General Johnston. This message was Johnston's reply to the one Pemberton had sent earlier concerning the decision to sever Grant's supply line. In it Johnston informed Pemberton of the evacuation of Jackson and reiterated his order for Pemberton to move at once and join him north of the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. Pemberton then decided, after wasting two days, that it would be wise to obey his superior. But by this time Pemberton was in an awkward position. His army was spread out "for about two and a half miles"⁴⁰ roughly north to south along the Ratliff road (see Figure 6). To further complicate matters his advance guard was in contact with a strong Union force on the Raymond road.⁴¹

Pemberton's reply to Johnston outlined a plan to reverse the army's route of march, recross Bakers Creek, and return to Edward's Station. From there he planned to move up the Brownsville road toward General Johnston's position at Calhoun Station, seven miles south of Canton.

³⁹OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, pp. 75, 93-94 and Pt. 1, p. 263.

⁴⁰Lee, p. 36

⁴¹OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 148, 639.

But the Confederate trains first had to be moved aside to make way for the front of the column which at that time was on the Raymond road heading east. Much confusion reigned as the elongated column of troops was reassembled and the wagons cleared out of the way. By 9:30 the "road was open" and was "free for the passage of troops."⁴² However, by the time his army was ready to move, Pemberton began to get concerned about the mounting din of battle to the south-east. It became evident that the Yankees were so close that they would soon be in a position to assault his long column and overrun the scattered units. Pemberton decided to forgo the move to join Johnston and ordered his division commanders to deploy in line of battle.

After some time, a battle line about one and one quarter miles long was formed extending north to south along the military crest of the ridge overlooking Jackson Creek. This ridge was just to the east of the Rathliff road. Loring's division was on the right (south), Bowen in the center, and Stevenson on the left (north) (see Figure 6). The Confederates believed that this orientation would offer the best defensive line; they apparently were unaware that three Yankee divisions from McPherson's corps were advancing down the Jackson road (northern Union column) straight toward Pemberton's vulnerable left flank.

⁴²OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 94.

About 9:00 AM Brigadier General S. D. Lee, from Stevenson's division, received a report from his forward elements that a strong Union column was approaching from the northeast.⁴³ This was startling news because there were no troops positioned to stop this advance and if this Union force continued unopposed, Edward's Station and the road to Vicksburg would be in Yankee hands.

Lee quickly shifted his brigade further to the north to block the Union advance. His brigade then occupied a narrow ridge with his right flank anchored on the crest of Champion Hill. Soon after Lee adjusted his position, Grant, in the Union camp, was made aware of the existence of a number of Confederate positions near Champion Hill.

In anticipation for an expected battle, Grant's staff gave him a hurried briefing on the terrain in the vicinity of the ridgeline. Satisfied that the Hill could be taken, Grant decided to assault and directed two divisions, led by Brigadier General Charles E. Hovey and Major General John A. Logan to deploy in battle formation.

Lee watched these two divisions form in the fields to his front but noticed that the Yankee formations were oriented in such a way that his left flank was again threatened. Consequently, he again shifted some of his troops further to the left. This caused concern to the rest of the

⁴³Lee, pp. 37-38.

Confederate line to the south of his position and as a result a general shift to the left took place. Lee's right no longer occupied Champion Hill, however, Brigadier General Alfred Cumming's brigade, which had also shifted left, took over this position. Thus, as the Union troops gathered for the assault, Pemberton's men were still adjusting their positions and many of the Rebel troops were tired from moving about the battlefield at double time. They were certainly not in the best of shape for the coming fight. To add to Pemberton's problems there were dangerous gaps in the Confederate line.⁴⁴

When the Union troops were formed and ready, Grant ordered the attack to begin and at 10:30 Hovey's and Logan's troops, 10,000 strong, rushed forward toward Lee's position cheering loudly. Lee's troops braced for the assault.⁴⁵

The Union assault force began working their way up the slopes toward Lee's positions but soon came under devastating fire from Lee's Alabamans on the ridgeline. The Yankee force slowed, then came to a halt. General Logan was encountering the most resistance but noticed that the Confederate left flank was weak and in places was unmanned. He quickly took advantage of the situation and ordered his reserve brigade to strike Lee's left and attempt to get behind the Confederate line in order to secure the Jackson road. If this could be done, one Confederate escape route would be cut off.

⁴⁴OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 95.

⁴⁵OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 42.

General Stevenson, meanwhile, watched the Yankee buildup to the left and realizing he could not stop this attack with his own forces, rushed an urgent message to Pemberton informing him that he could not hold for long without assistance.⁴⁶ He then repositioned some of his troops again. The Confederates moved to the left and became even more dangerously spread out.

Having adjusted their positions and regrouped, the Union troops continued the attack and by 11:30 began to drive back the Confederate outposts. The Confederate main line waited as the Yankees drew closer scrambling up the hillside. When the assaulting troops were within 300 yards, the Confederate guns opened up with double charges of canister. Under the withering fire the Federals quickly took cover in a shallow ravine but by then they were within shouting distance of the Confederate troops only 75 yards away. Huddled in the ravine, the Yankees received the order to fix bayonets and to prepare for a final lunge on the hill. When the attack order was given the Union troops leapt from cover and raced for the Confederate positions with a hideous yell.⁴⁷

A bloody slaughter raged for five long minutes as the Union troops, brandishing deadly bayonets and wielding muskets like clubs, drove the Rebels back. By 2:00 PM the hill was occupied by Union troops. The Confederates had lost four cannons and a number of prisoners. Dead and wounded littered

⁴⁶OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 121. ⁴⁷OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 44.

the battlefield but the slaughter continued. All along the ridge bitter fighting took place until about 1:30 PM when Lee decided he could no longer hold and consequently gave the order to fall back to a new defensive line covering the Jackson road.⁴⁸

But the Yankee tide continued on and before long drove back Lee's second line. The Confederates fell back in droves and some fled across the Baker's Creek bridge. As a result, Lee was forced to abandon a section of the Jackson road.

With part of the Jackson road in the hands of Union troops, Grant had partial ownership of one of the two escape routes available to Pemberton. He continued to apply pressure.

While this violent struggle was taking place to his north, Pemberton received the urgent message from Stevenson to send help. He received this message at about noon but did not issue any reenforcement orders until around 1:00 PM. No doubt he was concerned about conditions to his front. But oddly enough, no major Yankee assault was being thrown at the Confederate line from either the Middle or Raymond road, despite the fact that at least four Union divisions were on these avenues of approach.

Concerned over the serious consequences of his left flank being turned by the Yankees, Pemberton sent a staff

⁴⁸OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 102 and Lee, p. 45.

officer to:

Tell General Bowen to move up at once to assist Stevenson, and tell Loring to move his division - leaving Colonels Scott and Adams' cavalry at the ford - also to the assistance of Stevenson, and crush the enemy.⁴⁹

The courier first arrived at Bowen's headquarters but upon hearing Pemberton's orders, Bowen asked if the Confederate commander realized that a sizeable Union force was to his front. Bowen refused to obey the order unless preemptorily ordered to do so. One of Loring's staff officers who was present stated that Loring also concurred in Bowen's estimate because there was a large force in front of Loring's position as well which threatened the Confederate defenses along the Raymond road. The courier rode back to Pemberton to give him the news. Pemberton was furious and sent another order to Bowen to rush one brigade to Stevenson's left at once and to "follow with his other brigade as soon as possible."⁵⁰

Pemberton was greatly disturbed over the disheartening news from Stevenson to his north and over the disobedience of his subordinates in the south. Deciding not to wait, he rode up to Bowen's defensive positions himself and ordered Colonel Francis M. Cockrell, one of Bowen's brigade commanders, to move to Stevenson's assistance immediately.⁵¹ Cockrell obeyed and marched his troops north to join the

⁴⁹OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, pp. 120-121.

⁵⁰OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 121.

⁵¹OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 110.

fight. Bowen was not far behind for he soon moved up on Cockrell's right with Green's brigade. These two brigades then maneuvered into a position from which an assault on the Yankee line could be made. Although ordered to reenforce Stevenson, Bowen's men soon discovered that the situation was desperate and a counterattack was ordered.⁵²

About 2:30, Bowen's men, with a wild Rebel yell, lunged forward and charged the hill abandoned earlier by Stevenson. The Union troops tried in vain to hold them off and blasted the charging line with canister. It was hopeless. The Confederate charge tore into a Yankee line and could not be stopped. The Union troops broke and fell back from the crest of Champion Hill. The Southerners were once again in control of the commanding terrain and were then in a position to split Grant's army and score a major victory. They pushed forward to follow up the fleeing Yankees.

The Confederate drive was shortlived, however, as the Union retreat slowed and then stopped to resist the pursuing troops. The Yankees, having recovered, began to mass again to Bowen's front and then counterattacked his positions in full force. A desperate struggle ensued, but by 4:00 PM, with his ammunition running low and with his flanks dangerously threatened, Bowen ordered his men to fall back from the crest of the hill.

⁵²OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, pp. 110-111.

General Loring's division did not come to the aid of Stevenson or Bowen until late in the afternoon when it was too late to do much good. Pemberton had sent him a number of messages throughout the afternoon but Loring was of the opinion that Pemberton must not have had any idea that a large Union force was located on the Raymond road. Loring assumed that if he went to aid the left flank, the Raymond road would be abandoned to the Yankees. Pemberton was aware of the force to Loring's front but nevertheless ordered him to reenforce in the north. At one point Pemberton actually went looking for Loring himself out could not locate him for as he searched the battlefield, Loring had decided to obey and had marched north by a route other than the one Pemberton was on.⁵³

But Loring had moved too late; the Confederate situation was hopeless. Stevenson's division had been routed; Bowen's had been badly mauled in the valient counterattack; and a total of 16 Southern guns had been captured during the days fighting. In spite of the valient efforts of the Southern 'roops, they had been badly beaten. Pemberton had no choice but to give up the struggle.

Late in the afternoon Pemberton issued orders for his army to withdraw across Baker's Creek and ordered Loring to cover this retreat by organizing a defensive line on the

⁵³OR; XXIV, Pt. 2, pp. 76, 83, 91-92; and Pt. 1, p. 264.

Raymond road. Two routes were used by the Confederates, the Jackson road in the north and the Raymond road in the south. The exhausted army crossed Baker's Creek without much difficulty and continued on to the defenses on the west bank of the Big Black River adjacent to the Big Black Bridge (see Figure 7).

After watching Loring deploy his division on the Raymond road, Pemberton rode on to the Big Black Bridge. He wanted to insure that General Vaughn, who had been left to arrange the defenses on the Big Black, was prepared to receive the withdrawing troops and was ready to beat off the pursuing Federals. The Union troops, however, did not pursue the Confederates as hard as they could have. They too had had a trying day and, thus, limited their pursuit to harassing action on the retiring Confederate columns.

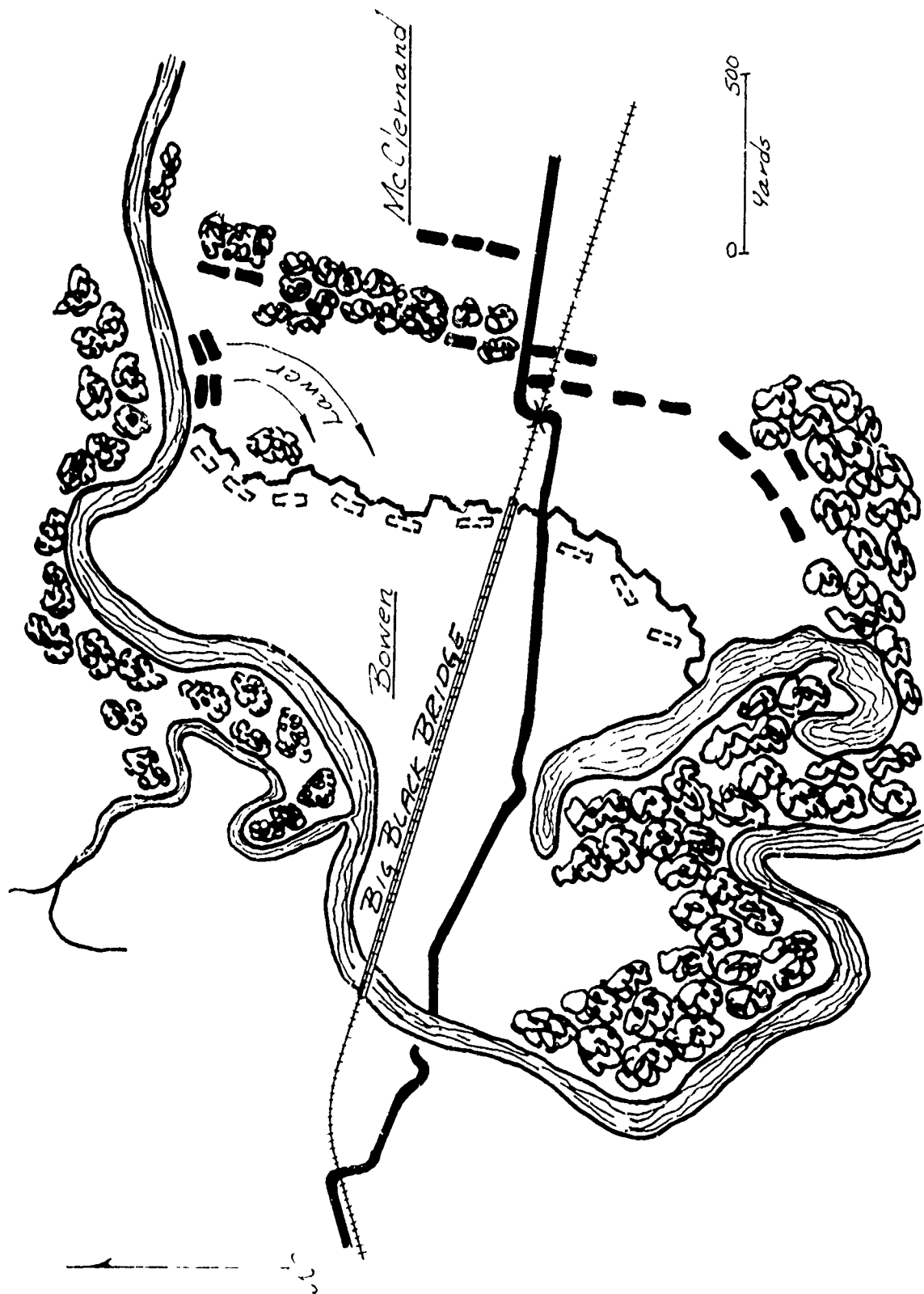
By nightfall the battle of Champion Hill was over but both sides had paid a grim price for the day's activity. Pemberton's casualties were 3,851 while Grant's were 2,441.⁵⁴ The struggle at Champion Hill was clearly the most decisive of the Campaign for it sealed the fate of Pemberton's army. By evening on the sixteenth he was completely cut off from Johnston's army. Unless he wanted to fight his way through the Yankee hord, he had no choice but to move back towards Vicksburg and hope for Johnston to come to his aid.

⁵⁴Thomas L. Livermore, Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America, 1861-1865 (New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1901), p. 99.

FIGURE 7

BATTLE OF BIG BLACK BRIDGE

Source: Struggle for Vicksburg, p. 39.



By midnight most of the Confederate forces had withdrawn to the defenses near the Big Black River. Loring, however, had been cut off by Union troops and could not get back across the river. He turned his division south and then east to evade the Yankee army. By the twentieth Loring reached Jackson and was then a part of Johnston's force.

That night part of Grant's army bivouaced on Champion Hill. The Union soldiers were not alone, for the dead and wounded were strewn about in terrible heaps. Throughout the night the ambulance corps with flaming torches prowled among the moaning soldiers, searching for the dead and wounded.⁵⁵

BATTLE AT BIG BLACK RIVER - (17 MAY 1863)

By morning on the seventeenth, the Confederates, with the exception of General Bowen, were on the way to Vicksburg. Bowen had been ordered to hold the line of fortifications covering the Big Black Bridge (see Figure 7) until Loring's division arrived. Pemberton at that time did not know that Loring was already enroute to join Johnston.

Bowen's defense did not last long, for McClelland's corps, arriving in his front by midmorning, routed the Confederates after a very brief assault. The colorful Union commander, Brigadier General Michael K. Lawler, led a violent

⁵⁵History of the Forty-Sixth Regiment Indiana Volunteer Infantry, comp. Regimental Association (Logansport, Indiana: Wilson, Humphreys and Company, 1888), p. 62.

charge which broke the back of Bowen's defense. Leading his men in a frenzied bayonet charge across an open field, Lawler routed the Confederates in short order.⁵⁶ Those who were not captured raced across the Bridge in full retreat and headed for the safety of Vicksburg. The route at the Big Black was no doubt Pemberton's saddest moment in the campaign. The last line of resistance outside Vicksburg had been broken. Pemberton's army closed into the city and by nightfall on May 18, was completely invested behind the defenses, for the Army of Tennessee had closed in on all sides. The siege of Vicksburg was about to begin.

⁵⁶OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, pp. 135-137.

CHAPTER IV

THE SIEGE OF VICKSBURG

"Defensive warfare . . . does not consist of waiting for things to happen. We must wait only if it brings us visible and decisive advantages." - Clausewitz¹

Inside the Vicksburg defensive ring the Confederates worked feverishly on last minute preparations for the expected Yankee assault. A force of 18,400 men, four Confederate divisions, moved about the earthworks readying the fortifications. Major General C. L. Stevenson's men were oriented to the south and east, Major General John H. Forney's also to the east and Major General M. L. Smith's men to the north. Major General John S. Bowen's division was placed in a central location to reenforce as necessary² (see Figure 8).

The earthworks surrounding Vicksburg consisted of nine strongpoints connected by a long line of trenches. Almost nine miles of these works protected Vicksburg from the north, east and south while the steep bluffs to the west offered natural protection.

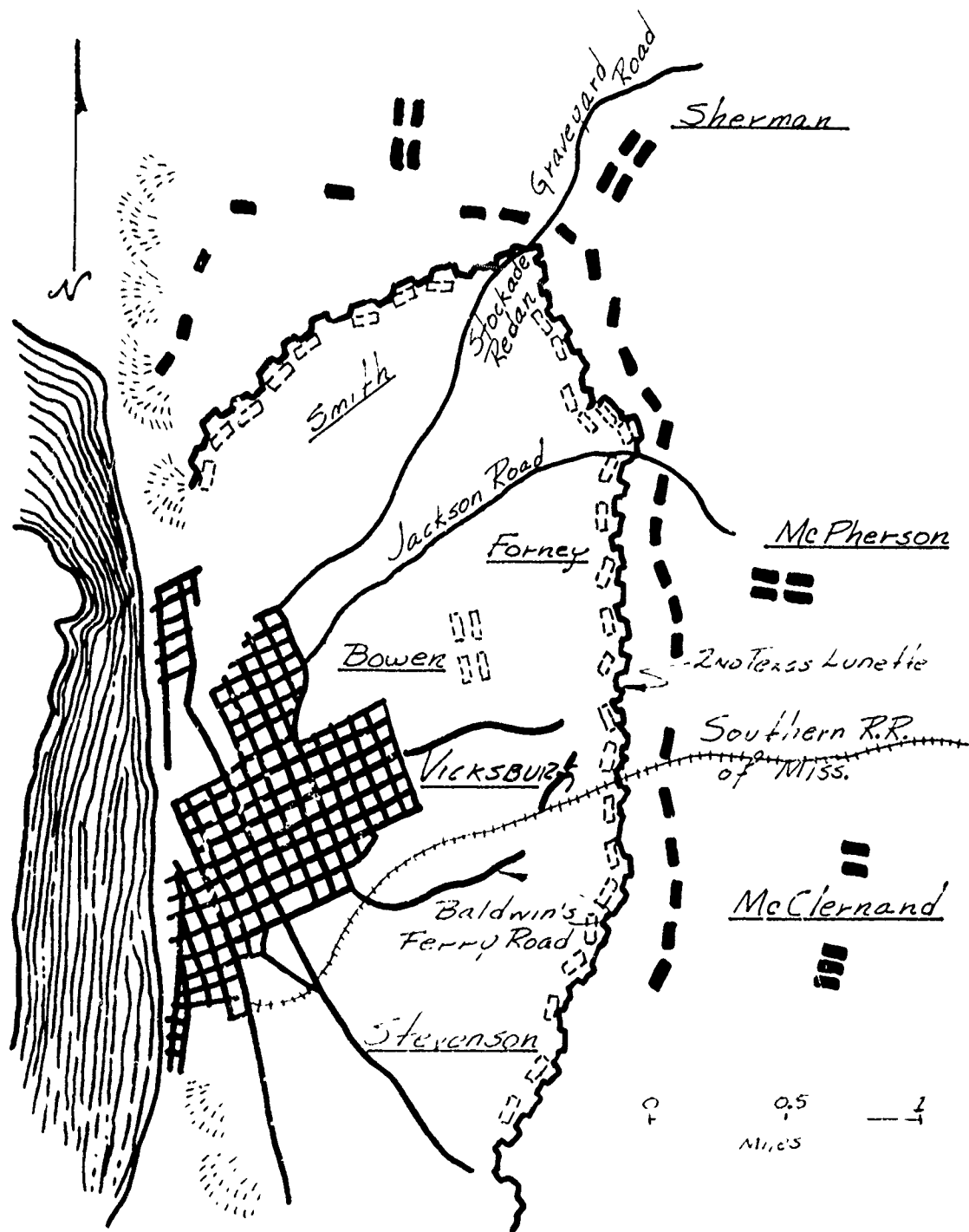
¹General Carl von Clausewitz, Principles of War, ed and trans. Hans J. Gatzke (Harrisburg, Pa: Military Service Publishing Company, 1942), p. 54.

²Charles S. Hooker, "Mississippi," Confederate Military History (1899) ed. C. A. Evans (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1962), VII, pp. 149-150.

FIGURE 8

THE SIEGE OF VICKSBURG

Source: Struggle for Vicksburg, editors of Civil War Times,
Historical Times Inc., (Harrisburg, Pa: Stackpole
Books, 1967), p. 42.



By the morning of the nineteenth, Sherman's corps had closed on the northern Confederate defenses and had established linkup with Porter's fleet on the river. McPherson and McClernand, meanwhile, had also moved in and had established their positions within several hundred yards of the Confederate works to the northeast and east respectively. Confident that the beaten Confederates would crumble under his assaulting troops, Grant scheduled his first attack for that same afternoon.

Sherman's corps was the closest to the earthworks and was the only Federal force which was prepared for an immediate assault. Early that afternoon Sherman hurled his men against the Stockade Redan Sector on the northern defenses. The Union lines struggled forward but soon became disorganized in abatis-choked ravines. Several times the Federals had to slow their forward move to reform but gradually fought their way to within 120 yards of the Stockade Redan. The Confederate defensive fire was murderous, nevertheless a Yankee regiment was able to dash to within a few yards of a ditch just in front of the earthworks. This was as far as they got. Crouching in the ditch, they were pinned down by the hail of fire from the Rebel trenches. Unable to mount the parapet to their front, the Yankees remained in the ditch and the opposing forces spent the rest of the afternoon laying in the hot sun blazing away at each other.³

³Struggle for Vicksburg, editors of Civil War Times, Historical Times Inc. (Harrisburg, Pa: Stackpole Books, 1967), p. 49; and Edwin C. Bearss, Decision In Mississippi (Little Rock, Arkansas: Pioneer Press, 1962), p. 298.

Late in the day, under cover of darkness, Sherman's troops broke contact and withdrew to the safety of the Union lines. Grant's first attempt to crack the Confederate defenses had failed and the price he paid was steep. Over 900 Union casualties were suffered in the assault while the Confederates lost less than 300.⁴

This initial repulse had not convinced Grant that the Confederate line would continue to hold so he ordered another assault to commence at 10:00 AM on May 22. All forces were involved in this second attempt, including Admiral Porter, who early in the morning on the twenty-second, began bombarding the city from the river below. For several hours the incessant roar of artillery, both army and navy, shook the Confederate line. Then, at about 10:00 AM, a simultaneous assault by elements of three Union corps rushed the Confederate works. Sherman's corps in the north threw itself once again on the Stockade Redan complex; McPherson assaulted the earthworks on either side of the Jackson road and McClellan crashed into the defenses flanking the Southern Railroad of Mississippi and the Baldwin's Ferry road.

On this second attempt, Sherman avoided the tree-stewn ravines which had caused him trouble before. Instead he decided to attack directly down the Graveyard road. The first wave of 150 volunteers dashed forward carrying logs

⁴The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies [hereinafter cited as OR], prepared under direction of the Secretary of War pursuant to Act of Congress approved 16 June 1880

which they planned to use to fill in the ditch fronting the Stockade Redan. They were cut down by the withering Confederate fire as were two more attempts to reach the parapets. These troops, crouching for cover, clogged the line of advance and, thus, Sherman was unable to move any more regiments forward. His attack came to an abrupt halt. Only about two regiments from Sherman's entire corps had actually closed with the enemy. The rest of his command never got their attack moving.⁵

Off to Sherman's left, McPherson was having problems as well. His right division, moved forward but soon became entangled in the abatis in front of the Rebel positions. His center line was also slowed by the heavy volume of fire from the Confederate trenches. Only seven of McPherson's thirty brigades were actually committed in this assault and of these, only one, the left brigade, made a concentrated effort to close with the Confederates. This brigade was led by Stevenson who hurled his troops at the Great Redoubt at the far left of McPherson's sector. Stevenson's men managed to reach the ditch in front of the works but could not advance any further. He was forced to withdraw his assault force under fire.

(Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1904), XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 167; also Indiana at Vicksburg, by The Indiana-Vicksburg Military Park Commission comp. Henry C. Adams (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, 1911), p. 172; and Struggle for Vicksburg, p. 50.

⁵Struggle for Vicksburg, p. 51; and Ohio at Vicksburg, Report of the Ohio Vicksburg Battlefield Commission (Columbus, Ohio: (no publisher listed), 1906), p. 58.

While Sherman and McPherson were desperately trying to gain a foothold on the Rebel positions, McClelland, attacking in the vicinity of the railroad, succeeded in penetrating the defensive line in the vicinity of the second Texas Lunette. However, this penetration was quickly sealed by the Confederates and McClelland sent an urgent message to Grant for more men in order to take advantage of the breakthrough. Upon receiving McClelland's request, Grant ordered Sherman and McPherson to renew their efforts and rushed one of McPherson's divisions to reenforce McClelland.

At about 2:00 PM Sherman renewed his assault but was driven back with heavy losses, at 3:00 PM he launched another attack but it too was promptly beaten back. His final assault an hour later also met with failure. Pemberton had little difficulty driving off Sherman's afternoon attacks for Sherman made the mistake of committing his troops at various locations in piecemeal. Once the Confederates had beaten off one attack all they had to do was to regroup and go to meet the next.⁶

Like Sherman, McPherson's renewed attack got nowhere. His men charged the third Louisiana Redan heroically but the assault was too feeble to succeed. Part of his corps got to within thirty yards of the Redan but were stopped at that point. Late that night McPherson's men crept out of the ditches in front of the Redan and returned to the safety of the Union lines.

⁶Bearss, pp. 302-303.

McClelland, meanwhile, had received his requested reinforcements but by that time the Confederates had reinforced as well and made a series of counterattacks to restore their defensive line. These were highly successful and forced McClelland to withdraw. Of Grant's three corps commanders, McClelland was unquestionably the most effective that day. He was the only one to commit all of his troops simultaneously and may very well have broken through completely had the other corps done likewise. McClelland, however, in failing to retain a strategic reserve, contributed to his own failure to sustain the momentum of the attack and break through the Rebel seal. Grant criticized McClelland for his actions on that day and claimed that the Union success in that corps sector was greatly exaggerated by McClelland.⁷

Late in the afternoon, the fighting subsided and by nightfall the Union troops began to drift back from the ditches. Grant's second attempt was a failure and it too had been extremely costly. The Northern casualties for the twenty-second of May were 3,199, while the Confederates were less than 500.⁸ For the next three days the piles of dead

⁷Ulysses S. Grant, "The Vicksburg Campaign," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, ed by Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1887), III, p. 518.

⁸Thomas L. Livermore, Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America, 1861-1865(New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1901), p. 100; and Bearss, p. 304.

and wounded lay on the field. The burning sun and the damp dews caused most of the dead to decay rapidly and the terrible stench drifted close to the Confederate positions. A truce was finally called in order to bury the soldiers laying on the field, some of whom had died during the three days of exposure.⁹

The unsuccessful assaults on the nineteenth and twentieth finally convinced Grant that the only way to bring the Confederates to their knees was to lay siege to the city. Every possible approach by land or water was blocked by Grant and Porter. Supplies of all types were cut off from Pemberton and for 47 days, until July 4, 1863, when Pemberton finally gave up, the Confederates were subjected to daily bombardments from the army artillery and the navy guns on the river. The soldiers had to endure the miserable experience of living in the trenches and life inside the city soon became difficult to bear.

During the remainder of the siege many approach trenches were constructed and on June 25, and again on July 1, mines were detonated in tunnels dug under the Confederate defenses. However, even these attempts met with failure. The Confederates were determined to hold the city to the end and each Union move on the earthworks cost many lives.

⁹S. D. Lee, "The Siege of Vicksburg," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, ed Franklin L. Riley (Oxford, Miss: Mississippi Historical Society, 1900), III, pp. 63-64.

The battles on the nineteenth and twenty-second were the last significant contests that the two armies engaged in. From that time on it was a waiting game for both sides. There was, however, a reasonably large Confederate force in Grant's rear under General Johnston that also waited, yet probably should not have. No Confederate offensive action to speak of was ever brought to bear on Grant's army by this force during the entire one and one-half month siege. This is frankly incredible for the Union forces surrounding the city slowly grew in size and as time went on the chances of driving them out of Mississippi grew less and less. With respect to offensive reaction on the part of the Confederates during the siege therefore, there are two questions that prevail. Where was General Johnston? And, why did he fail to come to Pemberton's aid?

Prior to his defeat at the Big Black Bridge, Pemberton sent a message to Johnston which explained his earlier defeat at Champion Hill and expressed his concern over the possibility of being driven back from the Big Black. Pemberton advised his superior that if he had to evacuate the Big Black Bridge he would also have to withdraw troops from Snyder's Bluff north of the city and would have to move inside the Vicksburg defenses. He also told his superior that "I have about sixty days provisions at Vicksburg and Snyder's. I respectfully await your instructions."¹⁰ Johnston had no sooner read this

¹⁰OR, XLIV, Pt. 1, p. 241; and Joseph E. Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), p. 186.

message when two local farmers informed him that Pemberton had in fact been driven back from the Big Black and had withdrawn his troops, including those at Snyder's Bluff, into Vicksburg.¹¹ Johnston sent the following reply:

. . . If Haynes' Bluff is untenable, Vicksburg is of no value, and cannot be held . . . Under such circumstances, instead of loosing both troops and place, we must, if possible, save the troops. If it is not too late, evacuate Vicksburg and its dependencies, and march to the northeast.¹²

About noon on May 18, as he was inspecting the earthworks with some of his generals, Pemberton was handed Johnston's message. He was amazed that Johnston would even suggest an evacuation of the city:

. . . The evacuation of Vicksburg! It meant the loss of the valuable stores and munitions of war collected for its defense; the fall of Port Hudson; the surrender of the Mississippi River, and the severance of the Confederacy. These were mighty interest, which, had I deemed the evacuation practicable in the sense in which I interpreted General Johnston's instructions, might well have made me hesitate to execute them. . . .¹³

Pemberton again called a council of war in an effort to decide what to do about Johnston's message. The unanimous opinion of the council was that it would be impossible to evacuate the city and still have an army of any value left to fight for the Confederacy. Pemberton, therefore, dispatched the results of this meeting to Johnston informing him that he intended to hold the fortress and that he believed Vicksburg

¹¹OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 218; and Johnston, pp. 186-187.

¹²OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 888.

¹³OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 272.

to be "the most important point in the Confederacy."¹⁴

Upon receipt of this message Johnston, a bit disgruntled, replied: ". . . I am trying to gather a force which may attempt to relieve you. Hold out. . . ."¹⁵

Johnston began to gather his army in the vicinity of Canton. On the nineteenth he telegraphed Major General Gardner to evacuate Port Hudson and move all troops and field artillery to Jackson. Again Johnston experienced the frustrating experience of not having his orders obeyed for Gardner did not move out of Port Hudson as instructed. Before long he too was invested and soon surrendered Port Hudson to a Union army under General Banks.

Reenforcements did, however, begin to trickle into Johnston's area of operations from other commands. Loring, who had been cut off from Vicksburg, arrived in Jackson on the twentieth. Three thousand troops from General Bragg's command in Tennessee, began arriving in Jackson on the eighteenth after a problem-filled march. On the twenty-fifth 2,000 more troops all the way from the Atlantic coast arrived in Jackson.¹⁶

By May 26, eight days after Pemberton moved into Vicksburg, Johnston's force numbered over 22,000 men. On this date Pemberton and Johnston between them had more than 52,000

¹⁴OR, XIV, Pt. 1, p. 273.

¹⁵OR, XIV, Pt. 3, p. 892.

¹⁶OR, XIV, Pt. 1, pp. 215, 222; and Pt. 3, pp. 889, 925.

soldiers while Grant had 50,000. By June 1, many more replacements had arrived which increased Johnston's army by another 6,000 men and the total Confederate strength rose to 58,000. Grant, on the other hand, still had about 51,000.¹⁷ On June 3, Johnston's force grew some more and reached 31,000 and by that time he also had 78 pieces of field artillery. But these troops who arrived on the third came from the bottom of the replacement barrel. There were no more. If Johnston was to attempt any offensive action on Grant, he had to move fast.

Concerned over his failure to crack the Vicksburg defense and over Johnston's growing army in his rear, Grant began calling for more men on May 25.¹⁸ On June second, the first of thousands of Union reenforcements went ashore at Snyder's Bluff. The massive Union buildup continued such that by June 17, Grant's command totaled over 77,000 while the Confederate total remained in the vicinity of 58,000.

Johnston continued to stall. In spite of continuous prodding by the authorities in Richmond, he did very little by way of harrassing operations on Grant's iron ring around Vicksburg. On June 15, having received no reenforcements since the third and being aware of Grant's buildup, Johnston telegraphed Secretary of War Seddon that saving Vicksburg was "hopeless."¹⁹ Seddon answered the next day:

¹⁷OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 370-371, 942-943; and Pt. 2, p. 325.

¹⁸OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 349-350.

¹⁹OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 227.

. . . Vicksburg must not be lost without a desperate struggle. The interest and honor of the Confederacy forbid it. I rely on you still to avert the loss. If better resources do not offer, you must hazard attack. It may be made in concert with the garrison, if practicable, but otherwise without, by day or night, as you think best.²⁰

On the eighteenth, Johnston replied that the Big Black River would cut off his retreat route if he was defeated by Grant and he, therefore, could not attack under those conditions!²¹ Seddon was greatly disturbed with this news and replied:

. . . the eyes and hopes of the Confederacy are upon you, with the full confidence that you will act, and with the sentiment that it were better to fail nobly, daring than through prudence even to be inactive. . . .²²

Johnston continued to procrastinate and although his cavalry did conduct vigorous scouting and patrolling near Grant's positions along the Big Black River, the bulk of his force did nothing but wait for the order to move.

Throughout the siege many messages between Pemberton and Johnston were carried through the lines but the longer the siege lasted the more difficult this became. For the most part these messages concerned plans for a breakout attempt by Pemberton. Early in June Pemberton began asking Johnston what his plans were in this regard and where he planned to make his move to assist the beleaguered city. The replies to

²⁰OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 227.

²¹OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 227.

²²OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 228.

these early messages did not reach Pemberton until the twenty-first of June and at that were not really answers to Pemberton's questions at all. Johnston replied by asking - what did Pemberton want him to do?²³

Each of these Confederate commanders continued requesting a decision concerning breakout from the other, but no decision was ever made. As the messages drifted back and forth, Grant's army grew larger. Union boats filled the river and breakout by Pemberton appeared more and more impossible. Admittedly, there was great difficulty in communicating ideas through enemy lines, but even this does not appear to be an adequate excuse for Johnston's failure to act aggressively.

On the twenty-first Pemberton sent a message to Johnston suggesting that the Army of Relief attack north of the railroad while he attempted a breakout in the direction of Hankinson's Ferry, Pemberton never received an answer to this message.²⁴ In fact, the last message he did receive from Johnston contained a suggestion that Pemberton make an attempt to cross the river and join the Trans-Mississippi forces. This was a ludicrous suggestion in view of the large numbers of Union boats which patrolled day and night along the Mississippi river.²⁵

²³OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 929, 953, 958, 961, 963, 965-966.

²⁴OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 969, 971-972.

²⁵OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, pp. 971-972.

Toward the end of June, Pemberton began having serious problems with troop morale. On May 18, when his troops first moved into Vicksburg, he had immediately ordered them into the trenches and there they stayed throughout the entire siege. In the beginning there was some hope since they all believed that Johnston's Army of Relief would come to their rescue. But, as time went on, this relief seemed less and less likely. Pemberton himself began to despair of holding Vicksburg for his men were exhausted and miserable and he saw no help from Johnston. Daily bombardments were a constant problem and the civilians even moved into caves dug into the hillsides in an attempt to gain protection. Food was, of course, a problem but in his report after the Campaign, Pemberton denied that the lack of food or ammunition convinced him to surrender.²⁶ In fact, the stores of food and ammunition existing in the city at the end of the Campaign were quite large.²⁷

The reason Pemberton gave for his decision to surrender was that his troops were enfeebled by long exposure to the burning sun, drenching rains, damp fogs, and heavy dews. Although his troops were on greatly reduced rations, there was

²⁶OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 285-286.

²⁷OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 178; also Pt. 1, pp. 62, 292; also Pt. 3, pp. 869, 987; and Maj R. W. Memminger, "The Surrender of Vicksburg - A Defence of General Pemberton," Southern Historical Society Papers (Richmond, Va: The Society n.d., 1876-1910), XII, p. 359.

still food remaining and enough ammunition to hold off another major Union assault or to attempt a breakout. There seems to be no doubt that despair was the ultimate reason for the surrender of Vicksburg and as such, part of the blame must be placed on Johnston.²⁸

Finally, on the morning of July 1, Johnston began his long awaited move towards Vicksburg. His army was at that time 32,000 strong. As the army moved along the hot dusty roads, with the troops loaded down with ammunition and three days rations, straggling soon became a problem. In fact, some units in the first day's march lost almost half their men.²⁹

The march was not well organized and the subordinate commanders were quite irritated with the slowness of the move. On the second, a violent argument broke out between Loring and Walker, two of Johnston's division commanders. Apparently Walker's troops took too long to break camp and held up Loring's division causing the volatile Loring to vent his anger.³⁰

By the third, Johnston's force had reached a bivouac site between Brownsville and the Big Black but except for some scouting and patrolling, they spent the entire day in camp eagerly awaiting the expected battle. The battle never came for as Johnston slowly moved toward the Big Black, the Confederate generals inside Vicksburg were already discussing surrender.

²⁸OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 285-286.

²⁹OR, XXIV, Pt. 3; and Bearss, p. 425.

³⁰OR, XXIV, Pt. 3, p. 986.

On the first of July Pemberton sent his generals a note requesting their opinion on a breakout attempt. On the second, three of Pemberton's four division commanders replied that their troops no longer possessed the physical stamina that a breakout attempt would require. Two of the three, including the aggressive Bowen, even recommended immediate capitulation.³¹

After receiving these replies from his division commanders, Pemberton called a meeting to discuss the matter further. The alternatives discussed were essentially that of breakout versus surrender. The general officers attending unanimously agreed that the troops in the trenches had endured enough suffering.³² About 10:00 AM on the morning of the third, General Bowen rode out of Vicksburg towards Grant's headquarters with a proposal from Pemberton for arranging the terms of surrender.

Grant's reply to Pemberton's proposal was that only an unconditional surrender would be acceptable. This was not what Pemberton wanted and upon reading Grant's reply he told Bowen that he would never surrender the city unconditionally. Arrangements were made for the two opposing commanders to talk the situation over.

That afternoon, Grant and Pemberton met between their respective lines and together with two advisors each, discussed the matter of surrender. No agreement was reached at

³¹OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 281-283; and Pt. 2, pp. 347-349.

³²OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, pp. 330-331.

this meeting but Grant did tell Pemberton that he would send the Confederates a letter outlining his terms by ten o'clock that night.³³

Back inside Vicksburg the Confederate officers met to decide what to do. None wanted unconditional surrender and some wanted to try and fight their way out rather than surrender in that manner. But by 10:00 PM the letter from Grant arrived. In it the Federal commander stated that he would not insist on an unconditional surrender. Instead, Grant proposed that the Union army move into and take possession of Vicksburg the next morning and that after each Confederate officer and enlisted man signed a parole, they would be allowed to march out of Vicksburg. Additionally, the terms required that, except for officers, who would be allowed sidearms and one horse each, nothing but individual clothing could be retained by the Rebels.³⁴

A vote on the question of whether to surrender or not was taken by the Confederate officers and all but two voted to accept the terms.³⁵ Pemberton himself still leaned toward attempting a breakout but in as much as the majority favored surrender, he addressed the group as follows:

³³John G. Pemberton, "The Terms of Surrender," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, III, p. 544.

³⁴OR, XXIV, Pt. 1, p. 284.

³⁵OR, XXIV, Pt. 2, pp. 352, 405.

Well, gentlemen, I have heard your votes and I agree with your almost unanimous decision, though my own preference would be to put myself at the head of my troops and make a desperate effort to cut our way ~~through~~ the enemy. That is my only hope of saving myself from shame and disgrace. Far better would it be for me to die at the head of my army, even in vain effort to force the enemy's lines than to surrender it and live and meet the obloquy which I know will be heaped upon me. But my duty is to sacrifice myself to save the army which has so nobly done its duty to defend Vicksburg I, therefore, concur with you and shall offer to surrender this army on the 4th of July.³⁶

Some objections were raised concerning the date of surrender but Pemberton replied that he knew how the Yankees thought and that in order to "gratify their national vanity" the Federals would "yield then what could not be extorted from them at any other time."³⁷

On the morning of July 4, 1863, at about 10:00 AM, white flags began appearing along the Confederate line, the long struggle for Vicksburg was over. The unhappy Confederates filed out of their trenches and shed their equipment in small piles in front of their formations.

Before long General Logan, under a blazing sun, rode up the dusty road into the city; behind him a long column of grimy Federal soldiers. At 11:00 AM, at the Vicksburg Courthouse, Grant and Pemberton stood silently side by side as the Confederate flag was lowered for the last time. The stars and stripes were slowly raised in its place.

³⁶S. H. Lockett, "Defense of Vicksburg," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, III, p. 482.

³⁷OR, XIV, Pt. 1, p. 285.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

"He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign." - Sun Tzu¹

In the preceeding Chapters General Pemberton's dilemma at Vicksburg was explored. The problems he encountered were surfaced and the actions he took against Grant were presented. His problem concerning the lack of intelligence was possibly the most pressing one and, of course, his lack of sufficient cavalry prevented its solution. Because of this problem of intelligence he was constantly at the mercy of the Union force throughout the Campaign and permitted himself to be, in the words of his antagonist, defeated "in detail."²

This is not to say that Grant was far superior to Pemberton in the tactical management of his forces, for Pemberton had previously repulsed several Union attempts with a certain degree of skill. Furthermore, Pemberton was operating under a handicap from which Grant did not suffer; he was

¹Sun Tzu, The Art of War, trans. Lionel Giles, ed. Brigadier General Thomas R. Phillips (Harrisburg, Pa: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1957), p. 51.

²U. S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1885), I, p. 496.

supposed to defend on his own ground, and not attack the enemy's camp. To conclude that Pemberton was easy prey for Grant would be erroneous for he did hold out for a considerable period and with a little assistance from Johnston may have turned the tide of battle against Grant.

The problem explored in this thesis was to determine if General Pemberton applied the principle of the offensive during his defense of Vicksburg and to determine why he failed to gain the initiative at any time during a defensive operation that lasted almost two months. The remaining paragraphs of this chapter contain the authors solution to the stated problem.³

The three major offensive actions discussed in the introduction were the spoiling attack, the counterattack and to avoid becoming fixed. These are the major actions that can be taken by a defender in applying the principle of the offensive.

Prior to Grant's landing and final assault on Vicksburg, Pemberton directed successful spoiling attacks at Holly Springs and against the Union Probes near the northern approaches to the Yazoo River. Spoiling attacks were also directed against Grierson's cavalry early in the Campaign but these were so diverse as to be virtually ineffective. Gregg was, of course,

³It should be noted that several historians, notably Catton, Never Call Retreat and Pemberton, Pemberton Defender of Vicksburg, have identified many of the problems discussed in this analysis as being the probable cause for Pemberton's ultimate defeat. The purpose here, however, is to relate these same problems to Pemberton's failures with respect to the principle of the offensive in the defense and not to explain his ultimate defeat.

ordered to Raymond to harass Grant's columns, but here again insufficient effort resulted in disaster. Finally, Pemberton himself started out on a venture to strike Grant's lines of communication, a truly offensive intention, which may have caused Grant some concern if it had been carried out, even though there were no supplies to cut off. The move alone may have been enough to transfer the guessing problem to Grant's headquarters for a period of time and may have given the Confederates additional time to reenforce in the Vicksburg area.

The counterattack was employed on four occasions, at Port Gibson, at Raymond, at Champion Hill and during the second assault on Vicksburg. Pemberton himself was personally involved in only one of these; the Confederate attack at Champion Hill. But none of these four counterattacks can be considered as a deliberate offensive maneuver by Pemberton's army against Grant's. Each was a local counterattack generated by one of Pemberton's subordinates at the scene of battle and not by Pemberton himself. Even at Champion Hill, the order was not to attack a particular point in the line but to "assist Stevenson."⁴ The subordinate commander, General Bowen, was the one who generated the counterattack. It was not Pemberton. Bowen himself also directed the earlier counterattack at Port Gibson; Gregg was not even supposed to attack at Raymond; and

⁴The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, XXIV, Pt. 2, pp. 120-121.

the counterattack during the second Union assault was a minor one since it only involved a small group of volunteers.

The final possible action, that is, to avoid becoming fixed, was at no time taken by Pemberton. This particular action implies the use of mobile tactics; keeping one's freedom of action by avoiding the main enemy strength yet remaining in such a posture that the capability to strike the enemy is retained. Although Johnston advised him to do this, Pemberton heeded the instructions of Davis and remained relatively fixed until such time as he was compelled to retire into Vicksburg and, thus, become completely fixed. Pemberton lost the Campaign when he made the decision to lock himself up in Vicksburg, for the Confederate forces outside the city did not come to his aid as he had anticipated.

The only truly offensive actions, therefore, that Pemberton himself directed against Grant's invading army were the spoiling attacks prior to Grant's landing and the planned attack on Grant's lines of communications. All the other contacts were either generated by local commanders or were not intended to be as offensive as they turned out to be. The planned move on Grant's supply line would have involved the bulk of Pemberton's force and was unquestionably intended to be an offensive act on the invader. But as it was, this move never materialized.

It can be concluded, therefore, that General Pemberton did apply the principle of the offensive prior to Grant's final operation against Vicksburg but from the time Grant

landed on April 30, 1863, until Vicksburg was secured by the Union, Pemberton failed to apply this principle of war. However, the problems that prevented his applying this principle were many and these same problems prevented his gaining the initiative against Grant's invading army.

In the introduction four major factors which can affect the application of the principle of the offensive in the defense were presented. These were aggressiveness on the part of the commander, excessive or unnecessary interference from higher authority, availability of intelligence and the availability and type of resources. These four factors will assist in identifying the problems that prevented Pemberton from gaining the initiative against Grant.

General Pemberton did not appear to be as aggressive as his antagonist and this may have affected his taking offensive action. Faced with combating a commander who was constantly on the offensive, Pemberton was hesitant to move very far from his base of operations. He appeared much more cautious than Grant and even when he did direct an offensive operation, as was the case when he planned to cut Grant's supply line, he did so reluctantly.

The uncoordinated instructions from Davis and Johnston could possibly be classified as interference because they placed Pemberton at a disadvantage with respect to Grant. He had to take time to determine which instructions to follow while Grant moved about freely with no one hindering his operations. But these instructions interfered with Pemberton's

operations only because they were uncoordinated. Pemberton himself probably should have questioned either Davis or Johnston concerning their conflicting messages but there is no indication that he did.

The lack of available intelligence has already been alluded to as a major cause of Pemberton's failure to gain any freedom of action and this unquestionably affected his taking offensive action. Intelligence was clearly the key ingredient necessary for Confederate victory at Vicksburg and Pemberton had virtually none. In fact, Pemberton himself claimed that the lack of intelligence resulting from the lack of cavalry was a major cause of his losing the Campaign.⁵

The one resource that Pemberton lacked which significantly affected his gaining any freedom of action was cavalry. Without this type of force he could not gain the intelligence he so desperately needed and, as was alluded to in Chapter II, Pemberton was fully aware, and made others aware, of this need. The one other resource Pemberton lacked was manpower. Although both armies were relatively equal at the beginning of the Campaign, Grant's grew rapidly in size because of the manpower resources available to the Union. But even though Pemberton's army was roughly equal to Grant's initially, it was not concentrated and as such was less effective against a highly concentrated and mobile Union force.

⁵John C. Pemberton, Pemberton, Defender of Vicksburg (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 291.

General Pemberton shouldered the blame for the fall of Vicksburg because he was the commander who surrendered the city to the Union. But to condemn him for this may be unjust because, as has been discussed above, many problems confronted the Confederate commander which were thrust upon him by his superiors. These same superiors failed to come to his aid and left Pemberton locked in Vicksburg until he had no choice but to give up in despair.

EPILOGUE

"Generally speaking military history would seem to furnish more instances of failure due to over caution than of failure due to excessive boldness." - Cyril Falls¹

A military historical study should serve one major purpose; it should provide students of military science and future commanders an opportunity to benefit from the mistakes of the past. One may say that the Civil War is a remote event and that since the tactical and logistical procedures employed today do not compare to those used in the 1860's, mistakes made in the Civil War could not possibly be repeated in the future. Nothing could be further from the truth. The principle of the offensive in the defense is being violated today in the jungles of South Vietnam. Perhaps spoiling attacks and counterattacks will be conducted to thwart the massive invasion from the North currently in process, but this has not been accomplished as yet. In the early stages of the Korean War it was thought that merely the presence of American troops would cause the invader to cease his attack. We found out in that war, in a most bloody manner, that the only ultimate course of action which can bring results is to employ aggressive, offensive action as rapidly and as massively as possible.

¹Cyril Falls, Ordeal By Battle (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 41.

With respect to the basic principles, wars are the same. As Sun Tzu pointed out, centuries before Pemberton fought at Vicksburg, the commander on the ground, if not permitted to fight his own fight, will have difficulty acting aggressively. There is no question that Pemberton's lack of aggressiveness can be traced to this basic problem. A final lesson that can be learned from Vicksburg is that a high state of discipline, not only among the rank and file, but among subordinate commanders as well, is essential to the application of the principle of the offensive. Aggressive, resourceful commanders will inevitably achieve this discipline.

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